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World War II

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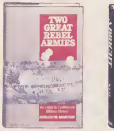

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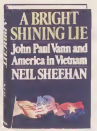

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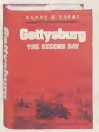

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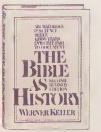

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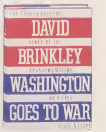

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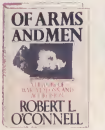

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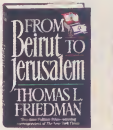

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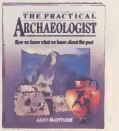

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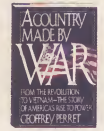

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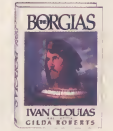

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World War II

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42 CLEAN SWEEP BY DESTROYERS
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COVER: The U.S. Army's 32nd Infantry Division trained eagerly for an amphibious landing on the northern coast of New Guinea, but nothing prepared them for the trek over mountains and through swamps that brought them to their baptism of fire at Buna (story, P. 18). LEFT: The Germans paid a high price for Norway (story, P. 34), and British Commandos like Peter Young made them continue to pay (story, P. 12). MIDDLE: Already a veteran by the time he landed on Italian soil, Audie Murphy proved more adept in war than at peace (Book Review, P. 50). RIGHT: The 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron had to take on a German panzer division at Montrevel (story, P. 26).

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Despite a media brownout, this book fought its way onto the bestseller lists.

And when you read what it reveals about Teddy and Chappaquiddick, you'll see why.

Ray Kerrison explains it all in his *New York Post* column:

"The biggest surprise — and scandal — of the publishing season is the public's extraordinary demand for a book exposing Sen. Edward Kennedy's fatal escapade at Chappaquiddick, despite a review blackout by the nation's media giants.

This book is titled *Senatorial Privilege: The Chappaquiddick Cover-Up* (Regnery Gateway, $21.95). Written by Leo Damore, it made the *New York Times* non-fiction best-seller list yesterday for the eighth straight week.

Yet the . . . *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Boston Globe*, *Time* and *Newsweek* have all boycotted it.

The media blackout is all the more suspicious because Damore's account is a meticulous examination of what happened at the bridge and the aftermath. It was written with the cooperation of Joseph Gargan, a Kennedy cousin, who was involved in the nightmare. . . .

Damore's book leaves no doubt that: a) Kennedy left the party for a romantic interlude; b) he was drunk; c) he drove off the bridge at considerable speed; and d) his license had expired five months earlier.

It discloses how Ted Sorenson, President John F. Kennedy's speechwriter, drafted Sen. Kennedy's fictitious explanation of the tragedy for a national TV audience."

People Magazine shares the enthusiasm:

"An achievement of reportorial diligence, this book tells a story that the most imaginative crime novelist would have been hard put to invent. It is a tale of death, intrigue, obstruction of justice, corruption and politics. It is also one view of why Sen. Edward M. Kennedy was never indicted in connection with Mary Jo Kopechne's death . . . readers will find it hard to put down."

Adds the **Wall Street Journal**:

"Absorbing and definitive account . . . Damore . . . is a disciplined and relentless writer who makes his case more devastating because he never steps back and editorializes. Each falsehood, blunder and evasion is in tight focus. . . ."

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Brawling, sweating, and incredibly young, the guys who came to stay were your 90 Army combat divisions.

Steelheaded, Slogging, Pushing,
Ducking down.
Pushing again, Dying.
Pushing the more, Ever
forward.

So could go the stanza for those during World War II who *didn't* fly the airplanes, sail the ships or sing the *Marine Corps Hymn* verbatim, without losing a beat. So could go the stanza for those who came to fight and hold the enemy territory while others once more darted ahead.

What was it that Carl Sandburg wrote about his Hog Butcher city of Chicago? "*Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of youth, half-naked, sweating, proud to be . . .*"

That could be, too, descriptive of the *main body* in war, in THE war, the army. In this case, the U.S. Army's 90 combat divisions that went to war *(laughter, brawling . . . and tears, too)* in 1941 and thereafter. And came back (those who did) with pride, with lost youth . . . but with the victory that all knew was necessary, that *had to be.*

Elements of the 32nd Infantry Division make their way across Eroro Creek en route to Embobgo, New Guinea, on Nov. 5, 1942. Divisional traditions could only be made one way—the hard way.

The story of one such division, the 32nd Infantry, appears on Page 18, and we certainly wish we could squeeze in all those others at the same time (give us a few minutes, though, and we'll try to work them in one at a time).

What about some of those others, though? Did they all come through such a crucible of fire, claim such a colorful and proud tradition, fight so many combat days (apparently at least 600), and so forth? Well, truth be known and through circumstance beyond anyone's control, not in every single respect, no. But other divisions do have their own stories nonetheless. They did their part.

Take the 3rd Infantry, known as the "Marne Division" for its proud World War I background. Take the 3rd and recall an amazing combat record in WWII—the invasions of North Africa, of Sicily, at Anzo, Italy, and of southern France. All told, 531 combat days and more casualties than any U.S. division with 27,628 killed, wounded or missing. And 34 Medals of Honor!

The oldest Regular Army division entering the war was the 1st Infantry Division, the "Fighting First," the "Red One," as it was often known. It fought from North Africa to Bloody Omaha at Normandy, and on into Germany. The 2nd Infantry ("Indian Head") Division, meanwhile, in combat from Normandy to Germany and Czechoslovakia, naturally had as its slogan, "Second to None."

The 4th or "Ivy" Division claims to have sent the first American patrol across the German border (September 11, 1944); it served in Normandy, in the hellish Huertgen Forest and at the bruising Bulge . . . and since we cannot list all 90 U.S. combat divisions, one must move rapidly on here:

•The historic First Cav., "dehorsed" in 1942, joined the island-hopping in the Pacific, fought for the liberation of the Philippines (freeing 3,700 civilians held at Santo Tomas University) and was chosen to raise the Stars and Stripes over Tokyo at the end of it all.

•The Americal, trained for the long, hard and bitter fight for Guadalcanal on the very ships carrying the troops to Down Under for their baptism in fire.

•The 99th "Checkerboarders" were among the many outfits bloodied at the Bulge, but soon were on the move forward again. *Slogging. Pushing.* In March of 1945 alone, the 99th was on the offensive for 24 days; it covered 495 square miles; it took 200 towns and 8,356 prisoners.

And so many more of the brave, incredibly young—*laughing, brawling, fighting their way forward.* In Italy, the war never began or ended; it simply went on forever. At the fore constantly was America's first all-draftee division sent into combat on any front, the "Blue Devils" of the 88th Infantry.

In one year of just about unremitting combat, the 88s "had chalked up an offensive advance of 325 miles [in Italy, count half those miles as up and down, not straight ahead]; captured 5,750 prisoners, destroyed six German divisions and badly mauled six others," says the same official history. For war's end, the last few weeks, the 88s continued in the same vein, leading the Po Valley drive and "bagging" 30,000 prisoners in 16 action-packed days.

We hear a great deal, and of course deservedly, of the more famous such as the 101st and the 82nd Airborne, the Armoreds and the one and only 10th Mountain, but there were many others . . . *steelheaded GIs* who put nose down and pushed and slogged their way forward, too.

C.B.K.

World War II

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German Tiger Tanks were at the Battle of the Bulge, but not in the numbers usually cited for them.

By Danny S. Parker

During the turbulent days of the Battle of the Bulge, 45 years ago, reports from American soldiers told of "Tiger tanks" in almost every sector of the Ardennes battlefield. A casual reading of Allied accounts would indicate that at least half of the German tanks employed in Hitler's great counteroffensive of December 1944 were the feared "Tigers." Even the U.S. official history estimated that no less than 250 Tigers were employed in the German offensive.

The fact is, such accounts grossly overestimate the number of Tigers the Germans actually were able to employ. A careful tally shows that no more than 136 of these beasts were ever committed to Hitler's *Wacht Am Rhein*. The number actually reaching the battlefield was still less: only 87 operational Tigers. So why the great disparity between the U.S. estimates and the actual numbers of Tigers employed?

As one reason, American soldiers were generally unfamiliar with German tanks in the fall of 1944. To most GIs, any armored vehicle with tracks and a long gun was a "Tiger." This was true even of American tankers and tank destroyers, and it was a state of affairs that came about for a number of reasons.

Most American soldiers had never confronted Nazi tanks, and when faced by a 50-ton killing machine, most would not be too concerned with proper model identification. Too, the Germans used a plethora of different types of tanks, assault guns and tank destroyers, increasing the confusion. Anything that was larger than a U.S. M-4 Sherman was called a Tiger. But research has documented that even smaller German assault guns (*Jagdpanzer IV, Sturmgeschütz* and *Jagdpanzer 38t*) were often called "Tigers" in American after-action reports. The heavier Panthers and *Jagdpanthers* were almost always called "Tigers."

A Tiger II, en route to the Ardennes Front, passes American prisoners in December 1944. Mounting the dreaded 88mm gun, the massive Tiger II was a rolling nightmare to the Allies.

Of course, there was some basis for this Tiger phobia. And certainly the German Tiger tank was an awesome weapon. At more than 55 tons and carrying four inches of frontal armor in the *ausf E* (and 70 tons and six inches of armor in the *Königstiger*), it was the most heavily protected tank in the entire war. Its 88mm cannon had already developed a reputation through service with Erwin Rommel in North Africa, where it could engage and knock out Allied tanks at a distance of almost two miles. With its 700 horsepower Maybach engine, such a heavy beast could move at an impressive rate of 24 mph, and its wide tracks made the Tiger more maneuverable than one might expect.

Surprisingly, the German attitude toward the Tiger was generally less complimentary than the Allied opinion. Hitler had once remarked that "each battalion is worth an entire panzer division," but his conviction hardly matched the more knowledgeable opinion of experienced panzer leaders.

Although it had been conceived as a "breakthrough" tank, the Tiger was never able to live up to that role—it simply wasn't suited for the rapid, mechanized battle envisioned by the German planners for the Ardennes Offensive. The Tiger fought best when on a defensive footing or in attack on static enemy positions.

Then, too, the terrain in the heavily wooded Ardennes made long-range engagements unlikely; the 88mm gun could not be used to best advantage. The faster traverse of its turret made the American Sherman more likely to get in the first shot. In a frontal engagement, however, the Sherman stood little chance. Only a flank shot of the Sherman's poor gun could penetrate the armor of a PzKpfw VI. In one verified case, 14 direct hits from a Sherman bounced harmlessly off a Tiger. An improvised Allied solution was to plaster the behemoths with artillery. This often was enough to send them running or else to cripple them and allow a Sherman or tank destroyer to maneuver around and hole them from the side. Even then, unless the turret of such a Tiger were immobilized, this tactic might cost a Sherman or two.

The 70-ton weight of the Tiger II was also a distinct disadvantage in the Ardennes. Rivers and creeks were common in the dark forest, and the frail bridges over them would often not carry the great weight of either a Tiger or a Panther. After U.S. engineers blew the few good bridges, the paucity of German heavy bridging equipment made this even more of a problem. In addition, the Tiger II was especially fuel-thirsty; the tank achieved only half a mile to a gallon of gasoline (the light U.S. Sherman tank boasted twice the mileage). This resulted in a range of only 90 miles on

Continued on page 54

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The edition is strictly limited to only 2500 worldwide. Each Revolver is individually serially numbered between 1 and 2500, with the prefix "V" for "Victory," just as the originals. The Certificate of Authenticity attests to the purity of the 24-Karat Gold plating and confirms the serial number and edition limit.

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The World War II Commemorative Victory Model is available exclusively through The American Historical Foundation. To reserve, call, write or visit. Your satisfaction is guaranteed or you may return the Revolver within 30 days for a full refund.

You don't need a Federal Firearms License to reserve. We will coordinate delivery through your local firearms dealer, after your reservation is received here. If you have an FFL, send a signed copy and your Revolver can be delivered directly to you.

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In the autumn of 1944, Russians, Americans and Slovaks cooperated in a bid for control of the Carpathians.

By Daniel P. Bolger

In the predawn hours of August 24, 1944, a small transmitter at Banksa Bystrica, Czechoslovakia, pulsed with three messages. To the regulars of the Slovak Independent Army and scattered clots of Soviet-sponsored partisans, the brief phrase "commence transfer" signaled the start of a German invasion and directed resistance in accord with previous covert planning.

To the nation at large, "Free Slovak Radio" called upon all citizens to fight the Germans.

Finally, to the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the United States, the new Czechoslovak Republic addressed its plea for military assistance. Digging into their mountainous territory, the insurgents then awaited the arrival of the mighty Red Army, but it was stalled a hundred miles to the east across the Carpathian Mountains. The Slovak rebels needed supplies and guerrilla expertise to survive until the Russian soldiers got there.

A German convoy comes under ambush on the Eastern Front. In 1944, the German rear was threatened by its Slovak allies, engineered and supported with American and Soviet aid.

Thanks to the Red steamroller, it had been a summer for uprisings in Eastern Europe. Greece seethed with guerrilla activities. The Rumanians hastily changed sides as Russian troops raced through their country. Bulgaria defected to the Allies. Scenting victory, Tito's partisans escalated operations in Yugoslavia. Hungary changed governments and tried to back out of the Axis. In Poland, Warsaw crackled with gunfire as the Home Army rose up as greeting for the advancing Red Army. In all of these cases, the Soviets, the British and the Americans were involved from the outset, harnessing local impulses for insurrection.

But equally restive Slovakia was different. Only the Soviets had liaison teams on the ground, and these were recent arrivals. The Soviet 1st and 4th Ukrainian Fronts (army groups) marked time on the wrong side of the forbidding Dukla Pass, barred by stiff German resistance. To the south, the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts smashed into Hungary and Rumania in a powerful drive to outflank the Carpathian massif. Relatively speaking, the Russians were close.

Not so the Western Allies. The British said they didn't have the assets. The American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was completely surprised just when fast action was absolutely necessary. Even as the Slovaks revolted, the Germans were moving with two *Waffen* SS divisions ar:d the 357th Infantry Division. Slovakia lay so close to the Reich that it demanded immediate action.

Nazi puppet-state Slovakia's conscript army of two field divisions and two security divisions had marched into Russia in 1941 alongside their *Wehrmacht* allies. Militarily, the Slovaks were no asset to the German cause. They resented the German commanders and advisers sprinkled throughout their units, and often disobeyed the foreigners. A battalion switched sides at Kiev in late 1943; several regiments defected near Odessa in January of 1944. American reports stated that "Slovak soldiers deserted *en masse* whenever they had the chance." The Slovak Independent Army was so poorly regarded that, in a time when the Germans struggled to hold their crumbling front line, they sent the Slovaks home to defend the puppet state. As the Russians crashed west in the summer of 1944, Slovakian discontent boiled over, exacerbated by German intentions to occupy their truncated Slovak neighbors rather than lose yet another ally. Yet, the Slovaks knew that they alone could not hold out against the SS.

The Soviet NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs—the predecessor of the KGB) and the Red Army GRU (Military Intelligence), already active in the Carpathians, controlled the few weak cells of Communist partisans active in Slovakia. The Soviets also had a Communist 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps in training in the USSR. These forces and a force that included the 2nd Czechoslovak Airborne Brigade, rushed into the fray.

Still, the Russians had no strong ties to the main resistance forces of the Slovak Army, which Josef Stalin saw as an arm of prewar Czech leader Eduard Benes' hated "bourgeois" government, now in exile in London. But the Slovak Army had now taken the lead role, and its acting commander, Colonel Jan Golian, cried desperately for assistance. As deputy chief of the Soviet *Stavka* (high command), General S.M. Shte-

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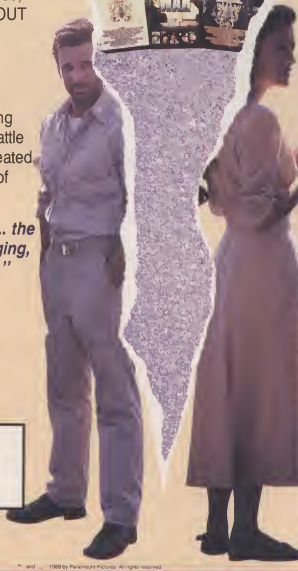

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MPI HOME VIDEO

Paramount

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Peter Young, Commando leader and Civil War historian, was a unique military man.

By Alison Michelli

Amidst the acrid smell of black powder, at the foot of the outer curtain wall of some old English castle, a "sergeant of musketeers" is reforming his men after an attack. A pall of smoke hangs over the field; visibility is low despite the fine weather.

"Front rank, stand fast! Cast about your muskets! Rear rank, prepare to march! March on! Prepare to stand! Sta-a-a-nd!"

Firing by introduction.

"Prepare to give fire! At the enemy to your front gi-i-i-ve fire!"

The sound is not unlike the popping of a number of champagne corks.

From nowhere, a genial, portly figure is strolling through the lines, talking to the men, encouraging them and asking them questions. He is followed by a slightly harrassed group consisting of his chief of staff, a runner and a staff officer who acts as his personal adjutant.

"And the Captain General is talking to members of Number 2 Company, King's Lifeguard of Foot," announces the commentator. The genial figure raises his baton languidly in acknowledgement.

For this is not the English Civil War of the 17th century. This is a 20th-century re-enactment by the Sealed Knot, the Society of Cavaliers and Roundheads, founded in 1969 by Brigadier Peter Young. It seems a strange place for the man who commanded No. 3 Commando in World War II to be—unless you know what an extraordinary man he was.

Peter Young was a professional soldier as well as a military historian. He was graduated from Oxford University's Trinity College with a degree in history and the intention of teaching, but the year was 1938 and he was soon to be making history rather than teaching it.

"I am," he once told me, "an inveterate gong-hunter."

The Germans found guarding Norwegian ports no less difficult than taking them, due to sudden attacks by British Commandos, of whom Peter Young was among the most prominent.

The reference to glory-seeking was a typically self-deprecating remark. He was far too good a soldier to be anything like that, but the fruits of his military career—Britain's Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and a Military Cross (MC) with 2 Bars—testify to his flair and competence in action.

He began his career in the 2nd Battalion of the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment (which has subsequently become part of the Light Infantry Regiment), but swiftly saw the possibilities in volunteering for "special service." He accordingly applied, and was accepted, at the very inception of the British Army Commandos. Young's career with them was both eventful and meteoric. A second lieutenant at the start of the war, he was a brigadier general by the end of it (with the substantive rank of major) at the age of 30.

He had a way with men—the common term for it is *charisma*. Few of us ever have the chance to meet someone who possesses this characteristic in such abundance. There was not one man who had served under him during World War II who was not proud to own up to it, and he for his part was invariably welcoming and hospitable when former soldiers made themselves known to him.

There is a famous story about an incident that occurred during the Dieppe raid in 1942 that perfectly illustrates his own approach to this job—and his men's faith in him. He was then second-in-command of 3 Commando. His objective was to take and destroy a battery of German 5.9-inch guns that made up part of the coastal defense battery. During the attack, Young's detachment came under fire from a German machine-gun nest, dug in on the far side of a cornfield. It had to be silenced.

"Okay," said Young to his men, "you have all been taught that 18 inches of packed earth will stop a bullet. I am telling you that 15 feet of standing corn will do the same. Go and get that machine-gun nest."

They charged and captured the position without loss.

The only wound he sustained throughout the war was a bullet in the ankle, acquired when he was diving for cover in a ditch and his legs were the only target available to the sniper!

Young served in France, Italy and Burma. The whole story is stirringly told in his own words in *Storm at Sea*, an autobiographical account of his wartime experiences. Although of a different genre, it ranks as high as any of his subsequent books on the military history of other periods. His works dealing with warfare from the time of King Charles I of England to Napoleon (an era stretching from the 1640s to 1815) have become standard references on their respective periods.

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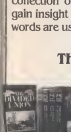

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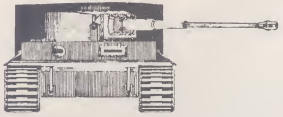

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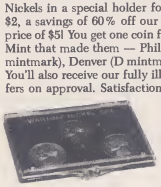

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The peacetime army lacked the excitement of his former career, and when the opportunity came for secondment to the Arab Legion he took it, there to distinguish himself as commander of the 9th Regiment, a Bedouin unit. He spent several years during the 1950s in the Middle East.

In 1959 he returned once more to academic pursuits, retiring from the army to become head of the Department of Military History at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. This establishment, which trains all officer recruits for the British Army, benefited greatly from Young's tenure at the post. He transformed the teaching of military history, as much by his inspired leadership of the department as by his personal approach to the subject which was, to say the least, infectious.

Now that he had the chance, he carried out a great deal of research on the period he loved most: the English Civil War. He began to write the books that became—and remain—definitive works on the subject. When, in 1969, he founded the Sealed Knot re-enactment group, it was to Sandhurst that he turned for initial recruitment. One of the earliest recruits was an officer cadet called Mark Phillips who became a pikeman. When Phillips subsequently married Princess Anne (now the Princess Royal), Brigadier Young, in a typical gesture, sent them two silver goblets engraved with the crest of the Sealed Knot as a wedding present.

The Sealed Knot was an instant success throughout Great Britain. Recruitment was brisk nationwide and cavalry troopers, musketeers and pikemen flocked to the colors. The Sealed Knot could only have been created by Peter Young. Of all the many achievements of his life, it is perhaps the one which most typifies the man; outgoing, colorful but true to life withal. As "Captain General," an authentic rank of the period, he controlled events on the battlefield as well as off it, presiding over the Inner Council, an institution also borrowed from the 17th century, with his customary wisdom and humor.

The term eccentric has been used to describe Young's unique approach to life. The true eccentric, it is said, has no idea that he or she may be different from anyone else. While Young possessed (as do many successful military men) a strong trait of showmanship in his personality, he was also genuinely "different."

Whether lecturing on the Duke of Wellington or on Prince Rupert, however, this was a historian of rank and insight, no mere "eccentric." His recurring theme was: "What do you think they were thinking? Where had they come from? Where were they intending to go next? What had just happened which was like-

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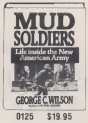

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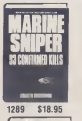

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ly to influence their mood and affect their actions?" In other words, history is not a series of dates but becomes instead a living entity.

One of Young's own heroes was Prince Rupert, the German nephew of King Charles I of 17th-century England. Prince Rupert was famous in his own time as a dashing cavalry leader who fought for his uncle during the English Civil War of the 1640s. Considered a *beau sabreur,* he was a daring and effective commander although only in his 20s at the time. In later life he became an equally effective (though somewhat more cautious) Admiral of the Fleet and left behind him testimony to a mind that had encompassed, in addition, both the arts and the sciences. It was Young's hope that, had he lived at the same time as this versatile individual (among the last true Renaissance men), he could have aspired to Rupert's circle of friends.

There is no doubt in the minds of any who were privileged to know Peter Young that Rupert would have been proud to call him a friend. And to recognize all his combat achievements during WWII. . .at Dieppe, for instance, Young rather famously brought back all his men alive—the only Commando officer to do so after reaching his objective, it seems.

Prior to Dieppe, it should also be noted, Young had wet his feet in Commando-raider work against German installations on the occupied Norwegian islands of Lofoten and Vaago.

His World War II activity was nearly constant and without discrimination as to theater or enemy. At one moment, he was earning a Bar to his Military Cross at Agnone in Sicily (1943); at another, he was leading his 3 Commando on raids into Italy (also 1943). Still another day found him active in the D-day invasion of Normandy, and from there, in mid-1944, it was off to the Far East to fight the Japanese in Burma.

As part of his obituary in late summer of 1988, the London *Daily Telegraph* reported on his wartime activities in Burma, in the campaign for the Arakan: "A fellow officer recalls seeing Young's Commandos under attack from an apparently endless number of Japanese at Kangaw and sending a message asking Young if he would like reinforcements. 'No thanks,' came back the message. 'We can see this lot off all right.'

"And he did. In 1945 Young was promoted to command 1st Commando Brigade in Burma and was generally acknowledged to be outstanding."

The *Times* of London, in its own obituary, called Young both a fighting soldier and a military historian who had "been in on some of the most desperate exploits of the Second World War."

While his ultimate choice was history, he did have those postwar years with the Arab Legion, including time spent as garrison CO in Old Jerusalem, a spot steeped in history if there ever was one! "His personality and character particularly appealed to the Bedouin soldier," said the *Times* with muted, respectful glee, "and Young established an exceptional rapport with his men, this despite the fact that his Arabic, although grammatically correct, was virtually unintelligible on account of his pronounced English accent."

As a writer, teacher and re-enactor of military history, Young produced a number of books, along with his articles and scholarly papers—among them was the book *Commando,* based in large part upon his own WWII experiences and insights as a Commando leader.

At the end of World War II, it was decided to erect a memorial in Westminster Abbey to the Army Commandos. To Peter Young fell the task of negotiating the site and arranging for the commissioning of the statue that would become the centerpiece of the memorial. The words inscribed below the statue are as fitting an epitaph to Young as they are to his fallen compatriots. They are from 2 Samuel 9:11:

"They performed whatsoever the King commanded." □

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Getting Tough The Hard Way

The proud 32nd Infantry Division went into jungle battle raw, met defeat at every turn—but then found a new and unexpected resilience!

By Mark Sufrin

In January 1944, two infantry sergeants just returned from overseas reported as cadre to a young lieutenant in a training company at Camp Howze, Texas. The officer was startled at their appearance. They seemed almost emaciated, with haunted eyes and yellowish skin, a remote look and too-soft voices. Before examining their files, he made casual talk and asked which outfit they came from.

"32nd Division."

"Where were you?"

"Buna."

The officer didn't exactly know where it was, somewhere in the Southwest Pacific. He glanced at the Red Arrow shoulder patch. He'd never seen it before—and for good reason. The 32nd was in combat before half of the 90 divisions in World War II had been formed. He wondered what the insignia stood for.

Later, he learned, the Red Arrow signified an outfit that spearheaded more attacks in two world wars than any division in U.S. history. And the 32nd—a Wisconsin-Michigan National Guard unit—had many other claims to greatness.

Indeed, the proud division's battle streamers are a panoply of American military history: Gettysburg; Antietam; Fredericksburg; Chancellorsville; Aisne-Marne; Meuse-Argonne; Papua, New Guinea; Leyte and Luzon. Yet, in the most precarious moments of the war against Japan, the 32nd allegedly was "disgraced" . . "demoralized" . . "a tragic failure" . . "never able to go under the guns again . . . "

Commanded by Maj. Gen. Edwin F. Harding, the division landed in Australia in May 1942. The Japanese, advancing with astonishing swiftness throughout the Southwest Pacific, were now in New Guinea, and supply lines from America to Australia and the vital supply base at Port Moresby were threatened. If the enemy captured Port Moresby on New Guinea's southeastern coast, he could strike directly at northern Australia.

The raw 32nd received cursory training in jungle fighting and survival and, by November 1942, was committed to action. The 2nd Battalion, 126th Infantry Regiment, was airlifted to Port Moresby, the first major tactical movement of U.S. troops by air in the war. The remainder went in by sea. The 128th Regiment was dispatched to a sector along the Goldie River, while the enemy fell back along the Kokoda Trail in the jagged Owen Stanley mountain range to prepare defenses at Gona, Sanananda and Buna—particularly Buna, a spot on the Solomon Sea on New Guinea's northeast coast.

The island of New Guinea was one of the world's least-explored, most inaccessible and disease-ridden territories. And Buna was a putrid, oppressive, frightening hell, only a bare scratch out of the tangle of jungle and stinking swamps, slimy mud, swollen rivers and creeks. Flooded by torrential rains, it harbored every kind of fever and affliction. But it was strategic—if the Japanese held it, all of eastern New Guinea might fall. If American forces could push the enemy into the sea, they'd gain bases from which to strike at the Japanese bastions in the Southwest Pacific—and begin the counter-offensive to retake the Philippines.

Major General Robert Eichelberger, who took command of I Corps on December 1, 1942, had an immediate objective—the 1,500-yard airstrip between Buna and Cape Endaiadere, within flying range of vital targets. Rabaul, with 150,000 Japanese troops, and also a feeder base for aircraft, lay 400 miles away on New Britain Island. It was 167 miles to Lae, 147 to Salamau, both on the northeastern New Guinea coast. To secure the airstrip, the Americans had to wipe out the Japanese garrison at Buna. And before the ordeal was over, they would have to rout them out and kill them by the thousands. Eichelberger's order from General Douglas MacArthur was brief and brutal: "Take Buna—or don't come back alive!"

To reach the battle area, the 2nd Battalion of the 126th made an incredible 150-mile march in October over the moun-

Members of the 32nd Infantry Division train at amphibious landing operations on a beach in Australia. Soon they will be facing their baptism of fire at Buna, New Guinea, for which this—and little else of their training—will prove to be of limited relevance.

Landing craft make their way along the coast of New Guinea, harassed by a flight of Japanese aircraft. The 32nd Division made the last leg of its journey to Buna only after a grueling 49-day, 150-mile march over the mountains.

tains from Port Moresby. But it took 49 agonizing days. Two battalions of the 128th flew in from Port Moresby and then proceeded to the coast below Buna in small craft. With them was one company of the Australian 7th Division. The 32nd's third infantry regiment, the 127th, was held in reserve.

The attacking troops were already severely fatigued and succumbing to tropical diseases. Malaria began spreading through the command, but the troops were ferried into combat nevertheless. Eichelberger later said he ordered them into battle against his will.

With the beach behind them, the Japanese prepared a strong base. Their navy controlled the Solomon Sea, but an American assault by water was impossible because of 25 miles of dangerous reefs. From the land side, the Japanese defenses—a three-mile strip, 500 yards deep—was approachable only by four native trails hemmed in by swamps and deep, swift creeks. The enemy only needed to plug the point where the trails debouched into a coconut plantation just short of Buna. The defenses were log bunkers reinforced with sand-filled oil drums and concealed by thick jungle growth. On one flank was the sea, on the other the deep Girau River, and a steady stream of reinforcements poured into the beachhead along good roads. Connecting trenches and bunkers formed a fortress complex manned by tough, battle-hardened veterans of China, Malaya and the Philippines.

The offensive for Buna, as well as nearby Gona and Sanananda, began on November 16, 1942. The 128th Infantry moved up along the eastern coastal trails, and part of the 126th swung around to the northwest, two battalions probing enemy defenses to the east. They were stopped by heavy fire a quarter-mile short of a dummy airstrip constructed to confuse Allied pilots. Wading through knee-deep slime in a heavy rain, the attacking men heard Japanese trucks along the short Buna road, and a man at the point said he saw enemy troops being brought up. The Americans were trapped, forced to lie in the mud for 12 hours, then managed to slip out, but took heavy casualties.

The next day the 3rd Battalion of the 128th tested the Japanese northwest of the real airstrip. Joined by a battalion from the 126th, these troops formed a second line entirely cut off by a swamp from the balance of the division to the east, a condition that remained throughout the campaign. The American lines had a left and a right, but no center. To complicate matters, the 32nd's intelligence was so bad at the beginning that it estimated enemy strength east of the Girau River at 400 men. There were 5,000!

Within a few weeks, the 32nd was an outfit of demoralized, terrified, sick men. They seemed to move in a slow trance, dazed almost to madness by the heat, the lashing rains, the black nights, the foul smell of swamp and jungle. Their foxholes never dried and they had to hunch themselves above water on extruded roots to eat—a can of C-rations a day, only a sixth of the regular ration. They were starving. Regimental commanders and their staffs rarely went forward from their command posts, often five miles back of the fluid battle lines. Almost the full complement of every company had been hit with malaria, dengue fever, typhus, dysentery, tropical ulcers and the scabrous jungle rot before they ever saw action.

Discipline lagged and the men grew restless and reluctant. They lay in rain-filled slit trenches twitching at jungle noises in the moist, hot darkness. Only 150 of the 2,500 men in the combat area were attacking. The 32nd was an easily spotted rabble, primed for slaughter.

The Japanese employed the terrain with their particular genius—high in the trees, low under flaring buttress roots, concealed in the grass and swamp, moving fast through tunnels and along the good coastal road, secure and staunch in their ingenious bunkers—they were virtually invisible. There was suppressed hysteria among the American troops. Their dead were everywhere, decomposing and stinking. Naked, sodden bodies, mats of hair. . .clumsy legs lay in the plastering slime. Suddenly, as if by signal—here and there, American soldiers broke and fled in terror.

But one man, Staff Sergeant Herman Bottcher of the 126th Regiment, pulled off a miraculous gamble that catalyzed beaten, panicked men into arguably one of the war's greatest combat division. Bottcher, 35, a German-born adventurer who'd held the rank of captain with the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War, knew something had to be done fast. It had to be a bold stroke, wild enough to fool the enemy. It had to give the men hope and sting them to action, show them the Japanese weren't superhuman jungle phantoms—only good clever soldiers who'd bleed and die when routed from concealment. He decided there was only one way—take a small force in, flush and hit the enemy, then hold until reinforced.

It was the night of December 5, 1942, when the burly, black-bearded sergeant and 16 men climbed from their holes. Bottcher had made his own reconnaissance and knew the approach to the beach was boxed in with snipers and roving patrols, zeroed in by mortars and interlocking lanes of fire from bunkers and pillboxes. Moving fast by night, he had to take the squad through razor-edged kunai grass as high as a man's head, cross a river, a tidal creek and a deep swamp, bypass the cover of thick coconut groves where the Japanese were dug in and his force could be cut down or lose direction. In short, he would fight through the enemy lines with exhausted, sick men, then try to hold.

He knew it was crazy—suicidal—but he did it, losing four men on the approach. Two were shot, one drowned, and the last simply vanished into a swamp hole. When they hit the beach, Bottcher radioed back that he'd taken the squad through, and that an immediate attack to exploit the breach would split the Japanese defenses. His small force dug in with a single machine gun.

The Japanese attacked the next morning and were beaten off, and another assault from the opposite direction was stopped. That night, two more attacks were repelled. On December 7, Bottcher blew up two machine-gun emplacements with grenades and radioed for more ammo. There was a reply from headquarters, but no mention of any follow-up attack or reinforcements. Bottcher began to feel that they'd been abandoned, marked expendable. That same night, he observed enemy troop barges moving in. He waited until the lead barge was swinging toward shore, then opened fire. Tracers cut through the darkness. A soldier poured precious water from a canteen over the heated gun barrel as Bottcher kept firing. Suddenly, there was an explosion and a flaring pillar of flame. A second barge was carried into the burning craft and burst into flames, then exploded like a monstrous orange flower. Enemy soldiers swam for shore, dragged themselves into the shallows, but as they rose and waded for shore Bottcher's men killed them. On the morning of December 8, a few bloated bodies reached the beach, but hundreds rolled in and out with the breakers on the streaked sea. Late in the afternoon, an officer came in with a few men, another machine gun and ammo. "You're making history," he said, "we call this Bottcher's Corner."

TOP: Major General Robert Eichelberger and his staff look over newly won ground in the Triangle area. Ordered by General Douglas MacArthur to "Take Buna—or don't come back alive," Eichelberger later stated that he'd sent the 32nd in against his will. MIDDLE: Troops of the Australian 7th Division, supported by an M3 light tank, fight their way into Buna alongside the American 32nd Division. ABOVE: A casualty is evacuated along one of the more passable roads in the swampy hell of Buna.

A .50-caliber Browning machine gun defends the American perimeter at Girawa Point. Staff Sergeant Herman Bottcher's platoon turned the tide by holding the beach for seven days.

"Look," the gruff sergeant replied, "I don't care what you call it. Get a big assault party in here or the Japs'll bury us. We haven't slept in four days."

"I'll report it to Division," the lieutenant said. "We'll do what we can."

Bottcher was no longer looking at him.

The Japanese tried to storm across Entrance Creek but were beaten back. Attacks came from both directions after dark, the curdling yells of the enemy momentarily drowned out by the crash of their own mortars. Bottcher, with the icy calm that maddened his men, waited. The Japanese charged in thick waves, tossing grenades. Bottcher's two machine guns and Browning Automatic Rifle opened up. Shifting his fire fast, he kept fighting off the nearest threat. Slowly the knots of enemy soldiers began to fall back in confusion. Bottcher had wounds in his shoulder, thigh and arm, and a punctured eardrum suffered while crossing a river on the approach to the beach. In constant pain, his arm almost useless, he still moved ceaselessly about the position, setting up defenses.

Early on the morning of December 9, the Japanese tried to set up two machine guns close to the tiny American beachhead, but their race across the sandpit was slowed by their own heaped dead. A massed flock was suddenly caught in the open; they died under Bottcher's savage fire. Their guns and ammo were recovered and Bottcher felt a little more secure, but he knew the enemy wouldn't ease the pressure. He radioed Division that he thought they could hold out another day or two. The reply said that General Eichelberger was coming in at dawn. With an aide, the general bellied into the salient, carrying sacks of rations.

"A company will reinforce you tomorrow morning," he told Bottcher. "We're working like hell to get an assault moving the day after that, the twelfth." He looked at Bottcher. "Try to hold it, Sergeant."

No troops showed up on the eleventh. Bottcher watched his men growing depressed, losing hope—he knew they still could be overrun by a surprise attack. He scouted the jungle near Buna Mission and spotted a strong Japanese force moving up. As the enemy soldiers came into the open, Bottcher leaped to his feet, yelling, and charged them. For an instant, the dumbfounded enemy fell back, then quickly recovered and began shooting. Bottcher was hit in the side, his fourth wound, but his men were alerted and swept the beach with fire, driving the enemy back into the jungle.

On the morning of December 12, a total of 26 Americans fought through to the beach. Sixty had started, but they'd been ambushed in a swamp and the rest were dead. None of the surviving arrivals could tell Bottcher when Division would attack. Weak from loss of blood, but refusing to leave the beachhead, Bottcher noticed curious activity in the vicinity of Buna Village. The Japanese were building a timber barricade, stringing it out from the jungle toward Bottcher's position. His force destroyed it with mortars and grenades. They wiped out the remaining Japanese, the last of more than 400 they had killed.

A small party led by a captain then came in. He told Bottcher that the division had jumped off that morning, and Eichelberger wanted him to leave the beach. When Bottcher refused, the officer jabbed him in the chest: "That's a general's order. Your free-lance days are over. If you won't go peacefully, we'll carry you back." His voice softened. "Division needs a live hero. Get moving."

For his epic seven-day defense of the beach, Bottcher was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross—and won a rare battlefield promotion, from sergeant to captain. More important, his heroism was the turning point. Something both mysterious and barely predictable was happening to the 32nd. Nothing chronicled it better than captured Japanese diaries. At first, the tone was gloating, triumphant:

"The American is untrained, afraid, and stumbled about in the jungle. . . .They fire at any sound or shadow, wasting

Distinguished Division History

Among the 90 U.S. combat divisions deployed during World War II, the 32nd Infantry generally is credited with serving the most days in actual combat—600 to 654 by various count.

It was the first large-size American force to go on the offensive against the enemy in World War II—fighting crack, well-blooded Japanese troops in one of the most hideous places on earth, New Guinea, and notching a costly victory in the process. The day the war ended, the men of the 32nd were chasing the remnants of that once-great enemy army through the mountains of northern Luzon in the Philippines.

In the Civil War, as the Iron Brigade commanded by Brig. Gen. John Gibbon, the 32nd suffered more casualties than any similar unit in the Union Army. In its baptism of fire at Second Bull Run (Second Manassas), it lost a third of its men. At Antietam, on the war's bloodiest day, the 2nd Wisconsin had only 17 men left at the end. At Gettysburg, outflanked and heavily outnumbered after other units collapsed, the brigade made a savagely heroic stand on McPherson and Seminary ridges and lost heavily, its 24th Michigan suffering 85-percent casualties. As a combat force, that was the end of the unit often called "the best in the Army of the Potomac."

The 32nd was one of the first divisions to reach France in 1918. But the general staff officers at AEF (American Expeditionary Force) headquarters were afraid of its heavy concentration of men of German stock and ordered it broken up. They were slated to become replacements or cadre to train troops, and for a time about 7,000 of the 32nd's men worked as laborers. Major General William Haan finally had the division restored to combat status, and it quickly

ammunition, giving their positions away. . . .They are like scared children who cannot learn. . . .We can kill them all. . . ."

But soon the entries began to change:

"The enemy is very hard to see in the jungle. . . .Enemy tactics are to hurl heavy mortar fire on us and rush in close behind. . . .We received heavy damages and many losses today. . . ."

The 32nd finally was turning on the Japanese with deadly purpose and skill. The amateurish, bewildered, exhausted Americans were being transformed into deadly fighters. Wavering men suddenly turned expert killers. The swamps were choked with the rotting corpses of dead Americans, but those who lived were different men. Now, the shortage of food, ammo and other supplies became matters of ironic or macabre jokes, not whining complaint. The weather grew worse, typhus and malaria raged, the men still had barely enough food to keep them alive. But morale improved. Almost every man was hit with fever, but he kept moving, attacking. It was one of the most extraordinary transformations in the history of war. And—through the dank jungle—the Japanese seemed to sense it.

By mid-December, Buna Village was captured, but the worst close-in fighting was still to come. It would take face-to-face assaults to flush the Japanese from their bunkers, fighting so vicious even generals were killed or seriously wounded—Brig. Gen. Clovis B. Byers, I Corps Chief of Staff; Hanford McNider of the 32nd, his face torn open by a grenade; Albert W. Waldron, the division's artillery commander. Time after time, Eichelberger himself miraculously escaped death by inches.

In mid-December reinforcements were brought up: the division's reserve regiment, the 127th Infantry; and seven Australian light tanks and a battalion of the 18th Australian Brigade. The battle was nearing a climax. More than 150 enemy bunkers on Cape Endaiadere, under groves of coconut trees infested with snipers, were destroyed in a spectacular assault. A captured diary recorded the mental state of the Japanese:

"With the dawn the Americans start shooting again. They crash in from everywhere, and now they have tanks. All I can do is shed tears of resentment. Now we are waiting only for death. Even the Invincible Imperial Army is at a loss. . . .Who are these Americans?. . .The others were such frightened children. . . ."

As the 32nd gained experience, its firepower began to tell on the Japanese. "Enemy tactics are to hurl heavy mortar fire on us and rush in close behind," noted a captured diary.

The 127th, fresh and full of fight, jumped off in its first action, the most difficult of infantry tactics—a night crossing of a deep stream under fire against an entrenched enemy. But the regiment had learned its lessons well from the veterans and took its objective in a single furious attack. Two men were awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously. First Sergeant Elmer Burr was about to lead a charge when a grenade landed near his company commander and some bunched men. He yelled for them to run and threw himself on the grenade, taking the burst in his stomach. On the outskirts of the action, a platoon from L Company was pinned down by machine-gun fire after a short advance. Kenneth Gruennert rushed one pillbox with grenades, then shot its defenders with point-blank rifle fire. The last Japanese soldier alive wounded Gruennert in the shoulder. Crouching behind the pillbox wall, the sergeant attacked again. Lobbing grenades, he drove the enemy from the second pillbox—they were cut down by his men. Then a sniper, hidden in a "spider hole" under the roots of a tree, killed Gruennert with a bullet to the head.

The Japanese diaries continued to record the effect of the 32nd's onslaught:

"The Americans attack with great firepower. . . .They are brutal. . . .We cannot endure this much longer. We are resigned to death. . . .We cannot win without reinforcements. . . ." On January 2, 1943, astonishing news swept through the 32nd—large groups of Japanese were spotted heading for the sea, trying to escape by boat or swimming. But most of Buna's enemy defenders died in that terrible place, on solid ground.

became one of the powerhouse divisions of the war.

It fought superbly in the Aisne-Marne and Meuse-Argonne offensives. In the latter, the 32nd made a brilliant approach march at night across shell-torn fields and forests because of roads choked with traffic, then hurled itself against the *Kreimhilde-Stellung*, an element of the powerful German defense system. A gallant frontal assault by the 126th Infantry—the regiment that would loom so large in New Guinea in World War II—overran the "impregnable" enemy positions and, by November 11, 1918, Haan's men were spear-heading the advance when the armistice ending World War I was signed.

The 32nd had met and conquered 23 different German divisions, suffering 14,000 casualties, at least 4,500 of them dead. French General Joseph Mangin, under whom the 32nd served for a time, was so impressed with the ferocity of the Red Arrow troops, he called them *"Les Terribles"*. . .The Terrors. **M.S.**

Major General William G. Hann addresses his 32nd Division in 1918.

A 37mm anti-tank gun fires at enemy positions in Buna Mission. Of little use against German armor, the 37 was more adequate against most Japanese tanks, and a handy weapon for dealing with enemy machine-gun nests.

The nightmare of Buna finally ended for the 32nd Division on January 22, as it was ordered to Australia for rest and retraining together with the Australians; it had won a great battle, greater, one could certainly argue, than the more-publicized Guadalcanal. The price for this victory, however, was truly appalling.

Of the original 1,100 who'd started from Australia, only 95 were still in combat at the end. Of the 9,825 Americans who fought at Buna, 1,020 were dead, 3,790 wounded, and 5,015 victims of tropical disease. They'd killed several thousand Japanese, and provided the springboard for the drive north to the Philippines and the Japanese home islands.

The battered division didn't see action for another year as a new commander, Maj. Gen. William Gill, nursed it back into shape. On January 22, 1944—minds and bodies healed, reinforced and well-equipped—it was committed to battle in New Guinea again. The Red Arrow Division fought bravely at Saidor, Yalau and in the Hollandia-Aitape area.

On July 11 at Aitape, the Japanese swarmed across the Driniumor River in a desperate attempt to drive the Americans into the sea, hitting the 1st Battalion of the 128th Regiment. The lead platoon's officer was killed in the first flurry and Staff Sgt. Gerald Endl took command. He deployed his men, spotted an enemy force that was supported by eight machine guns and was enveloping C Company's flanks. Another American platoon was sent forward to cover the left flank, but the Japanese crashed in, fast, and began to wipe out both units. Twelve of Endl's men were badly wounded, seven of them cut off from help. Crawling back and forth under heavy fire, Endl rescued six and was going back for the last man when a machine-gun burst killed him.

Operations in the Aitape sector ended on August 25, 1944. The Japanese had suffered more than 10,000 casualties, their worst loss in any action in the Southwest Pacific. Less than a month later, elements of the 32nd were in action again, with the 126th Regimental Combat Team striking at the island of Morotai and the divisional artillery supporting the 41st Division on the island of Biak.

On November 14, 1944, the 32nd Division moved ashore on the east coast beaches of Leyte in the Philippines. The 127th Regiment drove toward Limon while other units swung into action along the Pinampoan-Ormoc road. In a struggle for Hill 400 in the Limon sector, the 127th waged a bitter eight-day battle that destroyed the crack Japanese 1st Division, breaking the Yamashita Line. In the fighting along the Ormoc corridor, three more men won the Medal of Honor.

One of the outstanding heroes was Pfc. Dirk Vlug. His battalion had set up roadblocks along the Ormoc road to prevent Japanese infiltration. On December 15, five enemy tanks lumbered into view. The lead vehicle put down a smoke screen and the tanks roared toward the roadblock, firing 37mm cannon and machine guns. The Americans couldn't see most of the vehicles and took cover. Vlug, however, grabbed a rocket launcher and six rounds and ran up the road toward the enemy. The lead tank fired at him and missed, but Vlug scored a direct hit with his first shot. The second tank ground to a halt and the crew leaped out, rushing Vlug. He killed two more with his pistol—the others ran back to their tank. Vlug then destroyed it with a single rocket round, hit the third tank, and closed on the remaining two with only two rounds left. With dead calm, he kneeled, took aim and scored direct hits. As the tanks flamed up and the enemy crewmen flung open

the hatches, trying to escape, Vlug killed them all. He walked away without a scratch.

On November 28, 1944, the 32nd lost its greatest hero. Engaged in a lone reconnaissance behind enemy lines in the Ormoc Valley, Bottcher, now a major, was trapped in a rice paddy by a Japanese platoon. He held out for almost two hours, but was finally killed by two bullets to the head. Advancing troops found his body face down in the muddy water, his hand still gripping a pistol. It is recorded in the official history of the 32nd Division that it hit the enemy in an uncontrollable frenzy that day.

By December 22, the 32nd linked up with the 1st Cavalry Division and, by January 1945, Leyte was secured. By the standards of Buna (117 days), Aitape (125) and Saidor (119), the 47 days of battle on Leyte, despite their unremitting violence, amounted to a brief stopover for the 32nd. Shifted next to Luzon, the division continued its superb combat record.

On February 2, 1945, the 32nd started an epic march and fight of 119 days across the spine of the twisting, sawtooth mountains (the Villa Verde Trail). The lead battalion was the 2nd of the 127th Regiment, commanded by Lt. Col. Charles "Monk" Meyer, an All-American halfback at West Point in the mid-1930s. On the morning of February 23, the 3rd platoon of K Company took part in one of the outstanding small-unit actions of the Pacific War. It attacked enemy-held high country—and within two hours had fought its way to the top by circling to the rear and ambushing the Japanese. The enemy, outnumbering the Americans almost three to one, burst from their holes to lock with the attackers. For six hours the two forces struggled to the death on the crest, and by nightfall every Japanese was dead.

Early in March, the division reached the main defense of the Japanese, centering around the Villa Verde Trail, about four miles west of the key village of Imugan. By the last week in May, after furious fighting, victory over the enemy in the Caraballo Mountains was almost complete. Leading elements of the 128th Regiment seized Imugan, opening the entrance to the Cagayan Valley.

The division rested for almost a month after its 119-day odyssey of battle. It reformed its chewed-up battalions, patrolled the foothills of the Santa Maria area and mopped up its old battleground. Then it was moved into northern Luzon to hunt down and kill the remnants of the Japanese Imperial Army. At the cease-fire on August 14, 1945, the 32nd was still pursuing the enemy—in the division's 654th day of combat.

A few days before the end, the division suffered one of its most grievous losses. Colonel Merle Howe, a repeatedly decorated soldier who had commanded all three divisional infantry regiments in combat, died in the flaming wreckage of a courier plane en route to discuss surrender terms with General Tomoyuki Yamashita. General Eichelberger insisted that Howe's replacement should also come from the 32nd. Better than any man, he knew what part the division had played in the Pacific War.

"It is entirely fitting that the 32nd Division should receive the vanquished enemy," Eichelberger later said, referring to Yamashita's surrender. "No unit did more to beat them. No group of men ever suffered more, or came back from greater despair to triumph. They fought longer, harder, and more heroically than any division in the American Army—and the honor belongs to them. At Buna, they won the battle that started us on the jungle road to Tokyo." □

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*Ask Mark Sufrin how he could know some of the more intimate details of this story, and he'll tell you—he was the young U.S. Army officer who greeted the two Buna veterans. For further reading—*Eagle Against the Sun *by Ronald Spector or* We Shall Return! MacArthur's Commanders and the Defeat of Japan, *William M. Leary, Ed.*

TOP: As the 32nd Division acquired experience the hard way, its Japanese counterparts lost much of their aura of invincibility. Far from being superhuman phantoms, they were just good soldiers who had enjoyed adapting to the New Guinea jungle no more than had the Americans. MIDDLE: The Allied assault on Buna came from inland and fought its way to the strategically important beaches. ABOVE: A gun crew takes aim at a Japanese machine-gun nest during operations from Buna to Sanananda Point.

Thought to be long gone, these German tanks—better known as Panthers—surge from a wood. Such was the opposition unexpectedly encountered by elements of the American 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron when they entered the French town of Montrevel in September 1944. INSET: The heaviest hardware available to the 117th to counter the 75mm gun-armed Panzer IVs and Panthers was the M5 Stuart light tank, armed with a 37mm "peashooter."

Mandate For Surrender

History has been unfair to the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, which, far from "going to sleep," fought for its life in southern France while headquarters nodded off.

By Arthur L. Funk

As dawn broke on September 3, 1944, the elite "Essex Troop" of northern New Jersey—the mechanized 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron—moved into the lit-

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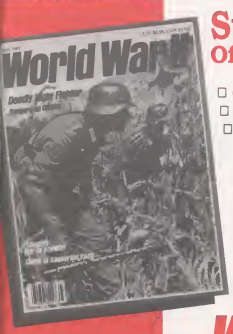

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World War II

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Protecting General Wiese's eastern flank were the powerful Panther tanks of General Wend von Wietersheim's 11th Panzer Division. Although not up to full strength, this division included veterans from the Russian front—its 75 or so Mark IV and Mark V tanks still possessed lethal capabilities.

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Powerful, camouflaged, Mark V Panther tanks—better known as Panthers—surge from a wood. Such was the opposition unexpectedly encountered by elements of the American 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron when they entered the French town of Montrevel in September 1944. INSET: The heaviest hardware available to the 117th to counter the 75mm gun-armed Panzer IVs and Panthers was the M5 Stuart light tank, armed with a 37mm "peashooter."

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History has been unfair to the 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, which, far from "going to sleep," fought for its life in southern France while headquarters nodded off.

By Arthur L. Funk

As dawn broke on September 3, 1944, the elite "Essex Troop" of northern New Jersey—the mechanized 117th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron—moved into the little French town of Montrevel with orders to block the retreat of German General Frederick Wiese's XIX Army, then crawling northward toward the Rhine. But against the squadron were pitted units of the formidable "Ghost" Division, the 11th Panzer, not long back from the Russian Front.

All day long the American troopers put up a stubborn fight, in which one of them won the Medal of Honor and two the Distinguished Service Cross. Finally, surrounded and with ammunition spent, they surrendered.

In 1954, exactly 10 years later, Lt. Gen. Lucian Truscott, under whose VI Corps the squadron had served, published his memoirs under the title, *Command Missions.* Imagine the troopers' surprise and chagrin when they read this passage: "My aide's journal records our activities: 'Debacle at Montrevel when 1½ companies 117th Cav. go to sleep and are surrounded and captured.' This was almost the only mistake this gallant 117th Cavalry Squadron made during the entire campaign. . . .This detachment had obviously grown somewhat careless."

Had they made a mistake? Were they careless? Had they gone to sleep? What really happened at Montrevel?

The encounter at Montrevel occurred just 19 days after General Alexander Patch's VII Army disembarked on the Riviera beaches of southern France August 15. On August 17, D+2, Hitler had ordered all his occupation forces in the south of France, except for the garrisons of Marseilles and Toulon, to withdraw to the north. Most of the German fighting units that formed the XIX Army, having fallen back to the Rhone River, were to retire northward along the eastern bank in an effort to reach Germany before they were cut off.

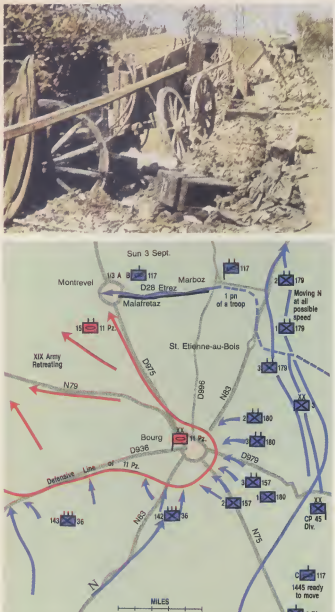
Protecting General Wiese's eastern flank were the powerful Panther tanks of General Wend von Wietersheim's 11th Panzer Division. Although not up to full strength, this division included veterans from the Russian front—its 75 or so Mark IV and Mark V tanks still possessed lethal capabilities.

Truscott, whose VI Corps was pursuing the German retreat, hoped to execute a modern "Cannae" by hammering the German rear while cutting off the line of march some 150 miles to the north, where the Drome River meets the Rhône. To accomplish this end-run maneuver he formed a completely motorized fast-moving "cavalry" unit, called Task Force Butler for its commander, Brig. Gen. Frederick Butler, Truscott's second-in-command. The task force was built around Lt. Col. Charles Hodge's 117th Reconnaissance Squadron, which could push ahead rapidly with armored cars and jeeps, possessed an excellent communications network, and was supported by light tanks and self-propelled howitzers.

Six days after the Riviera landings, Task Force Butler had reached the wooded heights overlooking the Rhône and had begun to fire, almost point-blank, at columns of startled Germans. But the Americans were not strong enough to block the escape route completely. Although they destroyed hundreds of vehicles and guns, they could not prevent most of Wiese's XIX Army from crossing the Drome and retreating toward Lyon. Thus, by August 31, the enemy columns were stretched out along the roads north of Lyon, especially the highway to Mâcon, Chalon and Dijon, but also on Route N83 leading toward Bourg-en-Bresse.

The Americans were in hot pursuit, trying to outflank the German line of march. But along that eastern flank elements of the 11th Panzer Division held Truscott's VI Corps at bay. By September 1, the Germans had gained control of the road from Lyon to Bourg. On a parallel line, about 15 miles to the east, regiments of the U.S. 45th Division were aggressively attempting to pierce the line. The Germans almost took Meximieux but withdrew toward Bourg as the last groups of their XIX Army abandoned Lyon. On September 2, there was sharp fighting south and east of Bourg, which von Wietersheim had been ordered to hold with his Panzers until the main body passed Macon.

It was at this point that General Truscott faced an important decision. The planners for the southern France landings had envisaged a delay of three months before reaching Lyon—they therefore had made no plans for Patch's U.S. Seventh Army dispositions farther to the north. Truscott also knew that French General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny, whose First Army was supposed to follow the American divisions, had



TOP: Wrecked transport abandoned by the Germans during their retreat up the Rhône valley. Part of the 117th's job was to raid and harass the Germans' supply columns. ABOVE: B and A troops of the 117th Cavalry were ordered west to "Seize and hold Montrevel," but they were ill-equipped to deal with the oncoming 11th Panzer Division.

seized the initiative by sending a reconnaissance regiment to the Swiss border. If Truscott followed Patch's latest field order, he would have to leave Bourg to the French while he shifted his own corps to the west, behind the German rear guard.

Truscott realized that General Wiese, although retreating due north at the moment, would have to turn east toward Besancon within the next few days. If Truscott could push his troops, already in de Lattre's sector, past Bourg and due north on Route N83 to Lons-le-Saunier and Besancon, he might achieve his objective. He needed Patch's approval and so, "late in the afternoon of September 2nd, I started James Wilson with Sergeant Barna on a 200-mile drive in the pouring rain back to the Army Command Post at Brignoles to deliver this letter to General Patch."

In the letter he argued that he was in a better position than de Lattre (who was short on fuel) to make the move. He also wrote: "At the present time, the 45th Division is attacking Bourg astride the Bourg-Ambérieu road, making favorable progress, having reached a point four or five miles off the town against light opposition. My reconnaissance squadron is north of Bourg, reconnoitering west toward Mâcon."

The reconnaissance squadron was, of course, Colonel Hodge's 117th Cavalry—but only Captain John Wood's B Troops of 124 men had penetrated this far north, some 10 miles beyond the nearest 45th Division troops. Troop C, attached to the 179th Regiment, was bivouacked 30 miles away in the Meximieux area, where Hodge had set up his command post. Captain Thomas Piddington's A Troop was even more distant, patrolling the Italian border 200 miles to the east.

Wood, with his command post near St. Etienne-du-Bois, had encountered few Germans during his patrols along routes N93 and D996, the roads due north of Bourg. Had he ventured a few miles farther west, to D775, however, he might have run into some stragglers.

In fact, about 75 German troops, drenched in the pouring rain on the evening of September 2, had bedded down at Montrevel, a small town about 10 miles northwest of Bourg. Meanwhile, von Wietersheim maintained his command post at Bourg, under orders to hold throughout September 3.

When Truscott asked Patch for authorization to go north, he intended to drive elements of the U.S. 3rd and 45th divisions, with high priority for gasoline and supplies, up Route N83, about 20 miles east of the anticipated German line of march. Quite appropriately, he would have reconnaissance along his left flank—as he himself had put it, "west toward Mâcon." Thus the 117th Cavalry was prepared for such orders.

Instead, in the evening of September 2, the actual order from VI Corps that reached Colonel Hodge read: "Seize and hold Montrevel by daylight. Set up roadblocks north, east, and south."

Why "seize and hold"? Truscott and his staff knew perfectly well that the 11th Panzer Division, estimated by G-2 as still operating 50 Mark IV and Mark V (Panther) tanks, controlled the rear guard, with no other German forces reported in the Bourg area. Around Bourg the 11th Panzer, while withdrawing slowly, had permitted no breakthrough even though confronted by five American battalions on September 2 and seven on September 3. If Truscott wanted to *control* Route 975, he could have given the mission to the 179th Regiment, reorganized after the Meximieux skirmish, moving north, and not involved in the Bourg attack.

Did Truscott's staff have adequate information about the condition of the 117th Cavalry on September 2, when the order was given? Only B Troop—124 men, 10 armored cars, 18 jeeps armed with machine guns or mortars—was in the immediate area. The tanks and assault guns had not yet come up from Meximieux. Piddington's A Troop had just been released from patrol duty along the Italian frontier, and to reach the squadron he faced a grueling, all-night drive over mountains in a drizzly rain. Piddington recalls that drive: "My men closed in on the road paralleling the Squadron CP at Marboz around 2200 [10 p.m.] hours on September 2. My men were exhausted. Many vehicles were scattered between Briancon to Marboz due to maintenance troubles. Only one platoon leader was available at that time. Gas was distributed by Squadron, but nothing else. . . .We had plenty of armor-piercing [AP], but no high explosive [HE] for our 37mm guns. We needed caps for our mines, and we needed rifle and hand grenades, plus pioneer and demolition equipment."

The officers of the 117th realized they were being ordered into a virtual suicide operation. Colonel Hodge protested, almost, as Piddington recalls, to the point of insubordination. But headquarters would not change the order, which seemed to demonstrate a failure of those in command to properly assess the capabilities of the 11th Panzer Division. Samsel has

An M-10 tank destroyer enters the town of Bourg, its superstructure replete with American troops. Its high-velocity 75mm gun would have been welcome to the 117th's men, fighting for their lives 10 miles to the northwest.

never been able to understand "the indifference. . . and lack of comprehension of the vital time elements highly essential in exploiting the initial success of the 117th in seizing Montrevel by daylight."

With no alternative, Colonel Hodge gave his orders: he placed his deputy commander, Major Robert McGarry, in overall charge. He told him: "You will take command of the rest of the squadron. I will go back to Meximieux and try to withdraw Troop C and bring them up with me to Montrevel. I will be there by the time you are there." Unfortunately, he could not get Troop C released until noon.

McGarry quickly drew up his orders. Captain John Wood's B Troop would lead the attack, assembling along the Marboz-Montrevel road (D28), so as to be on the outskirts, due east, at daybreak. Troop A would follow. As Piddington had gone ahead of his troop, he hoped all these platoons would arrive on time (only one did).

Five light tanks (one platoon of Troop F), commanded by Lieutenant Paul Seidel, would come in later, take the road going south toward Malafretaz, and block any enemy units moving up from Bourg. Armed with 37mm guns, these M5s would be no match for the German panzers, Mark IV or V. The 117th Cavalry's artillery available at Montrevel was almost nonexistent, consisting of two self-propelled 105mm howitzers and a half-track under the command of Captain Henry D. Egbert. The guns were deployed to the north.

With the coming of daylight, Captain Wood, guided by two French guerrillas, a Lieutenant Valla and Paul Venet, led his B troop from Marboz to Etrez and on the road westward toward Montrevel, while McGarry and Piddington followed, remaining on the road. The attack was a surprise, and the B Troopers soon rounded up some 60-70 German prisoners in various parts of the town. These were not front-line troops but rather administrative and supply personnel.

Wood's men, numbering about 100, fanned out to locate groups of still-sleeping Germans. They set up blocks at intersections. There was some resistance from German armored cars, but these were soon knocked out. One American was killed—Corporal Louis Stewart, who had rounded up several Germans, was shot by an unseen assailant armed with an automatic weapon. Two French citizens, one the local priest, carried the body into the nearest home, owned by a widow, Madame Donguy. After the battle she was found on her knees praying beside the body, from which she had retrieved a photograph of the American soldier's wife and daughter.

Wood set up his command post in a large administrative building located in a square just north of Route 28, the road from Etrez, and a few hundred yards from the crossroads where the highway from Bourg goes through. To protect his flank to the south, Wood stationed his executive officer, Lieutenant Padraig (Paddy) O'Dea, with machine guns and mortars, at a large apartment building. Placing his guns in front and the mortars to the rear, O'Dea could use an observation window on the top to direct his mortars along the Bourg road.

Not long after B Troop occupied Montrevel, a report reached General von Wietersheim, whose 11th Panzer headquarters had been set up in Bourg. Within the hour, von Wietersheim dispatched a reconnaissance battalion of the 15th Panzer Regiment reinforced by six Mark V Panther tanks, an 88mm artillery battery and an engineer company equipped with mines. The advance units reached Montrevel around 11 o'clock. German infantrymen were able to move freely along Route 975 toward the center of town, while others filtered into the trees and meadows east of 975 and south of Route 28. The latter forces held the road from Etrez under such heavy fire that it kept the Americans from using it.

Wood's men had spread out into all parts of Montrevel, but found themselves bombarded by 88mm shells, mortars and machine-gun fire. Wood used his radio to call in Piddington, who had been standing by in an armored car with McGarry. As the bridge just east of town had been knocked out, the stream had to be forded. McGarry remained outside while

A column of American trucks moves north through Provence with .50-caliber machine guns pointed skyward against the possibility of air attack. Two weeks of heady advancing came to a halt along the Lyon-Bourg road.

Piddington, with an armored car and several jeeps and about 10 men from Lieutenant Kenneth Cronin's 1st Platoon, moved into town across the fields to the north. Two German rounds straddled the troop's maintenance vehicle, which was stalled. Piddington ordered B Troop's Maintenance Chief, Ernie Eckert, and his men out of the vehicle just in time. Everyone scrambled for cover. The next shot slammed the truck 10 feet into the air.

Also entering the town with Troop A was Lieutenant Daniel W. Lee, an extra officer leading the Headquarters Platoon. Around midmorning the tanks, Troop F, came into action. When the order to attack Montrevel came through, Lieutenant Paul Seidel's platoon of five tanks in the Meximieux area was the only unit available. By this time the last half-mile into Montrevel had become blocked by disabled vehicles and lay under murderous enemy fire.

McGarry and Seidel decided the tanks should go south to Malafratez and enter the town on the Bourg road. Neither of them realized that the Germans had established a command post there at the Guillemand farm. In the courtyard they had parked four vehicles, while others had been concealed at various nearby farms.

Sergeant Richard Caspar, who commanded the tank "Flapper," remembers that day: "Seidel's tank came around a bend in the road where there was another vehicle. . .one of our armored cars that was captured by the Germans. Seidel's driver, Sergeant John Driscall, rammed into the armored car to push it out of the way so that we could get through. In so doing, the 37mm of Seidel's tank was pushed back, crushing Seidel in the chest and knocking him out. While all this was going on, we could see many of the enemy vehicles lined up to our front, a few hundred yards or so, and vehicles coming up alongside buildings to our left, a few hundred yards away. Before Seidel's tank was disabled, we blew up several of the enemy vehicles directly in front of us. These vehicles were loaded with ammunition, mines and fuel. The destruction of all the explosives left a heap of rubble in front of us that blocked the road. We could not get through."

All four of the German vehicles in the Guillemand courtyard were destroyed, as well as those at several other farms in the vicinity. The day after the fight, as the French farmers cleared up the rubble, they counted 11 shattered German vehicles, one of them the self-propelled gun Caspar had disabled.

The American tanks, meanwhile, had moved back to McGarry's CP, from which Seidel was evacuated. After a reconnaissance of the town by two of the tank commanders, McGarry agreed the tanks should go north and try to enter Montrevel along Route 975. Back in Montrevel, the Germans were coming up from Bourg in increasing numbers—and with heavy fire power. Wood and Piddington tried vainly to advance from the administrative building—they referred to it as the school house—where they had established their command post and where, in the basement, they held the German prisoners rounded up earlier.

They saw a Panther tank turning east from a narrow street into Route 28. Piddington organized two armored cars abreast. He and Lieutenant William Lutye strode on foot to either side of the cars, directing the drivers and gunners. As they moved forward, the American M8s, firing as rapidly as possible with 37mm armor-piercing shells at the tank's vulnerable tracks, stopped the Panther before it was able to bring its gun to bear. Then, at a range of about 100 yards, Captain Wood was able to "pick off" the German tank commander with a carbine as the German tried to extricate himself from the turret. Throughout the day's battle, the Germans found their Panthers were too massive for effective deployment in the narrow French streets. They relied more on artillery, mortars and machine guns.

Limited themselves in ammunition and arms, Wood and Piddington tried one device after another to hold up the Germans—or to make them pay dearly for every foot they

gained. They laid mines along the road, but unfortunately the devices had no caps. The mines crisscrossed the length of the street and may nevertheless have made the Germans think twice before they ventured an advance. With more demolition charges and the proper tools, the cavalry troopers might have blasted through buildings and made their defense more effective. As it was, in spite of their best efforts, by noon the Americans were in a desperate situation.

Radio appeals to headquarters had not brought any reinforcements, so the officers on the spot agreed they had best send an officer back to headquarters to make a forceful and detailed report. Lieutenant Ken Cronin, commanding A Troop's First Platoon, volunteered to drive an armored car north, on 975, then turn east toward the CP at Marboz. As Cronin recalls: "I knew that the main road north dog-legged to the east immediately after it crossed the main east-west road in the center of town and there was very little likelihood that tank fire from the south could bother me. . . . We were using a single-lane dirt road which intersected with the main road. Suddenly there was a slight turn in the road with a roll of concertina wire stretched across it. The driver said: 'What do we do about this wire?' I replied, 'Just kick this car in the ass and ignore it.' He did and we were dragging about one hundred feet of concertina wire behind us when we hit the main drag, which stirred up a nice cloud of dust so that the enemy didn't know how many vehicles we had coming. There must have been at least a company of Kraut infantry between us and the north edge of town. However, they really panicked and were diving through windows, into doorways, behind walls, and some ran down the street ahead of us scared out of their gourds."

Cronin kept going and had soon left Montrevel behind him. He could not pick up McGarry's CP on his radio, but kept moving in the direction of Marboz. He encountered Sergeant Bennett ("Tex") Lawson and a handful of tanks on their way north. Cronin expressed misgivings as to whether the light tanks could alter the situation, but Lawson said he had orders and insisted on going ahead. Neither had radio contact with McGarry's CP.

It was about 3 in the afternoon when Tex Lawson led the five light tanks of Troop F into Montrevel from the north. They proceeded in two columns toward the center of town, machine guns and 37mm guns blazing. But the Germans had set up road blocks with mines, and had emplaced anti-tank guns zeroed in at intersections. Lawson's tank received a direct hit, wounding one of the crew, and sending the other two scuttling for cover. Lawson held his post in the face of certain death to cover his crews' withdrawal and to divert the enemy's fire. He was killed in this action and was awarded, posthumously, the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism.

The column had bypassed an unseen gun emplacement, which opened up on the rear tank. The crew escaped through the turret which, however, blocked the driver's hatch. In spite of the crossfire, Sergeant Bryant Casterline ran back and turned the hatch enough so that the driver, George Tompkins, could escape. Casterline was later awarded the Silver Star for risking his life to save a buddy.

The other column, led by Sergeant Caspar from the tank "Flapper," had come up against a mined road block, had lost radio contact, and now faced a hailstorm of fire. Caspar also won the Silver Star for his tenacity and courage in this engagement. "He was seriously wounded but continued to fire in order to permit the successful withdrawal of his platoon. He returned to the command post, but refused hospitalization until he gave an account of the activities to his commanding officer."

Ultimately, three of the five tanks were lost, but only one member of Troop F, Tex Lawson, was killed.

TOP: On Sept. 4, 1944, Bourg-en-Bresse fell to the Americans, and exhausted troops of the 157th Infantry were warmly greeted by its residents. At Montrevel, the fighting was having a different outcome. ABOVE: Captain Thomas C. Piddington rushed his A Troop on a grueling overnight drive to join B Troop at Montrevel.

In the apartment house south of Route 28, Paddy O'Dea kept throwing mortar rounds at the Germans. T/5 William Mecabe recalls: "As far as the eye could see were German armored vehicles and when the first mortar shell had fallen we had a chance to zero in."

Since there were no windows in the wall overlooking the mortars, Mecabe became a messenger running from the observation windows to the mortars. In time the Germans located the observation post and leveled such a barrage against it that, with one man killed—Sergeant Lawrence Barsby—and others wounded, O'Dea finally had to abandon the building. He and his men then became trapped in a blind alley and were forced to surrender. O'Dea was later awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his delaying efforts.

In another part of town, a German mortar was wreaking havoc on American positions. Lieutenant Daniel Lee picked seven men and moved out to locate and destroy the German emplacement. When he had reached a position within 30 yards of the Germans, Lee was spotted and badly wounded in his right thigh. Nevertheless he dragged himself ahead, shot

An M8 Greyhound armored car in action. Armed with the same 37mm cannon as the M5 tank, the M8 was not meant to take on enemy armor, yet Greyhounds of A Troop managed to help knock out a Panther during the fighting in Montrevel.

five members of the mortar crew and knocked an armored car out of action. Unconscious, he was carried by his men back to the school house, where the American wounded were being cared for. Piddington helped get Lee across the street and remembers that a German tank ceased firing to permit the evacuation. For his heroism, Lee was awarded the Medal of Honor.

Another trooper, T/5 George Scruggs, driving an armored car, was able to maneuver his vehicle to a position where the gunner knocked out a German tank and self-propelled gun. He was later awarded a Bronze Star for his initiative and courage in holding his position until, late in the day, the road block was overrun.

Outside of the town, McGarry and Samsel became more and more distressed about the fate of B Troop. Shortly after meeting Tex Lawson, Ken Cronin located McGarry. "I had never seen Bob McGarry lose his composure before," Cronin recalls, "but at that point he was completely shattered." All of the squadron officers realized how devastating a position Troop B would be in if more help could not be brought to Montrevel. They had already made contact with Colonel Hodge, back at Meximieux, who radioed them to get in touch with Truscott's VI Corps headquarters, then located at Ambérieu, 30 miles away. Major Samsel, the 117th Cavalry's operation officer, and Colonel Hodge, personally went to corps headquarters, but were refused assistance. They were told to go see Maj. Gen. William W. Eagles, whose 45th Division command post was at Meyriat southeast of Bourg.

"After several critical hours of conversation," Samsel recalls, "the second battalion of the 179th Regiment was placed at our disposal, without transportation and 20 miles from Montrevel." By this time Troop C had reverted to the 117th. Samsel assembled this force, using Troop C vehicles. En route to Montrevel, he obtained from the 3rd Division a heavy armored patrol with two tank destroyers. By 3:30 p.m., this improvised mini-task force arrived at the outskirts of Montrevel with a plan of attack soon developed for use at 4:00 p.m. In town, as Piddington and Wood learned reinforcements were on their way, the news raised the morale of the fighting men and of the wounded in the schoolhouse basement.

At 3:55 p.m., VI Corps Headquarters instructed the group *not* to attack, but rather to assemble on high ground east of Montrevel. The units in the town were informed of this decision, which meant they were being left on their own. By this time many soldiers from Troops B and A had been killed, wounded, or captured. Lieutenant O'Dea and his group had been taken prisoner. What remained of the U.S. forces had been forced back into the schoolhouse and the square in front of it. All the grenades were gone; only a few rounds of rifle and machine-gun ammunition were left. The Germans now controlled the crossroad and were moving tanks and infantry toward the schoolhouse.

A Panther turned into the front yard and fired point-blank at the building. The Americans inside all had weapons, but only a few rounds of ammunition for each man remained. Captain Wood manned a light machine gun and Captain Piddington fed the last 25 rounds into the gun. They all aimed at the slits in the turret of the tank, now only 50 yards away, and sprayed gunfire at the ditch where German infantry crouched, ready for the final charge. To the Americans, it looked as if annihilation was imminent. The tank's first cannon shot whistled through the wall and exploded in the hall, killing one man, T/5 Leopold Renzi, and wounding two others.

Piddington recalls that Wood turned to him and said: "This is it." Piddington agreed.

Negotiations ensued. The handful of Americans, surrounded, exhausted, their ammunition expended, with four killed, more than 30 wounded, most of their equipment and vehicles in flames, had no choice. They also had to think of the French civilians in the line of fire. In surrendering, they had more than fulfilled the requirements which honor demanded. Later, the German colonel in charge of the attacking force

explained to Piddington and Wood that they had been up against the 11th Panzer Division, which had gained great combat experience during three years on the Russian Front. The rear-guard action of this division, he explained, had been the principal reason why the German army had been able to avoid being cut off. The German officer said this was the toughest American force they had ever encountered.

Colonel Hodge recorded in his personal memoirs: "It is noteworthy to note here that the Commanding General of the 11th Panzer Division sent me a message through the doctor whom we had left in Montrevel. The CG said, 'We just don't believe that there is a small armored force here. We believe it is a big operation, and when we found out that it is only a squadron, we were utterly amazed, and would you please convey my congratulations to your commanding officer, who is putting up the strongest fight that we have had in the war.' "

Interestingly, the German official report greatly exaggerated the outcome at Montrevel, alleging that 280 defenders were killed, and that three Sherman tanks and 94 other vehicles were destroyed. The German claim of taking 126 prisoners is closer: the figure was actually 102, including 31 wounded.

Where did General Truscott obtain the impression that the 117th Cavalry had "gone to sleep"? Its personnel, in fact, had carried out ill-conceived orders; they had fought courageously to hold an untenable position. The official VI Corps Historical Record describes the incident accurately, with no hint that there was negligence on the part of the 117th. It is just possible that once he received the green light from Patch, Truscott put all his energies into prodding his 45th and 3rd divisions toward Lons-le-Saunier and Besancon.

The idea of "holding" Montrevel was superceded when it became clear that Wiese did not intend to retreat along Route N83, but would go straight north along the Saône River to Chalon. There was no strategic value in rescuing Troop B—all the priorities called for abandoning the Montrevel road in order to reinforce N83—Truscott's revised line of advance. Whatever the motivation, the negative assertion in Truscott's memoirs should be erased from the record: the 117th did *not* go to sleep at Montrevel! That he made this assertion is peculiar because, as his diary confirms, Truscott was concerned: "Chief of Staff goes out to find out what happened. General talks to Major McGarry, exec of the 117th, in War Room after dinner. Still no explanation, but remnants pulled and sent north."

What happened afterward? Of the 31 wounded POWs, the Germans left 12 behind, including the prospective Medal of Honor recipient Lee.

Two French civilians had been killed. Farms to the south and one building in Montrevel were burned. Captains Wood and Piddington were trucked north with 80 other prisoners, but a day later, when the convoy came under air attack, Wood, Lutye and six others escaped. The rest remained in German prison camps until the war's end. Of the 15 armored cars that entered Montrevel, only two remained, one of them the vehicle in which Cronin went for help. Troop B's vehicles were replaced with 6 x 6 trucks, and the squadron continued on to distinguished service in the Vosges Mountains. □

Arthur L. Funk, professor emeritus of history at the University of Florida, serves as chairman of The American Committee on the History of the Second World War. For further reading he recommends: the chapter "The Riviera and the Rhône" in Russell F. Weigley's Eisenhower's Lieutenants. *Alan Wilt's* The French Riviera Campaign *and General L.K. Truscott's* Command Missions *are excellent, but they both perpetuate the "went to sleep" myth. The forthcoming* Riviera to the Rhine *volume, by Jeffrey J. Clarke, in the official* U.S. Army in World War II *series, will provide an authoritative account of the southern France campaign.*

TOP: "As far as the eye could see were German vehicles," recalled an American mortarman. Despite superhuman efforts, the 117th's survivors were cut off. MIDDLE: The schoolhouse where Captains Piddington and Wood made their final stand, showing the 75mm hits that forced them to surrender. ABOVE: The 11th Panzer Division's commander commended the 117th on their stout fight, and Lieutenant Daniel W. Lee was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Truman on Jan. 23, 1946, for his part in the battle.

Rombaksfjord resounds with mighty broadsides as the Royal Navy, led by the battleship Warspite, *returns to Narvik on April 13, 1940—and woe unto the German destroyer flotilla that stands in its way!*

Heavy Price For Conquest

Fifty years ago, Germany won a conquest in the Norway campaign that reopened the fireworks of World War II after a monthlong lull.

By Lawrence M. Greenberg

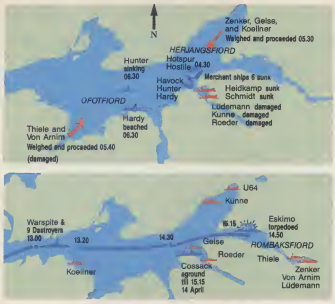
WWII 50th

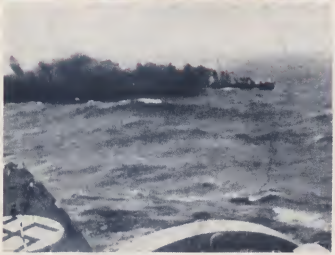
Nearly 200 miles west of the Norwegian port of Trondheim, dawn had just broken out as anxious sailors aboard the British destroyer *Glowworm* searched the heaving waters around them for a comrade washed overboard during the night. In that same northern dawn, though, the lookouts spotted first one, then a second, German warship plowing through the early-morning haze. The German ships were the destroyers *Hans Ludemann* and *Bernd von Arnim*.

Only later would it be ascertained that they formed part of the screen for an invasion force led by the two battleships *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, along with heavy cruisers *Admiral Hipper* and *Admiral Scheer*. Clearly enough, however, they were the enemy, and sporadic or not, the war declared seven months earlier was war in earnest. At 8:15 a.m., April 8, 1940, then, with the sea breaking over her bow, *Glowworm* informed her own British task force that she was engaging the enemy.

The three destroyers exchanged fire until the 10,000-ton *Hipper* joined the fray in response to calls for help from *Arnim*. The British *Glowworm* was no match for the cruiser's 8-inch guns, and a torpedo salvo *Glowworm* fired failed to connect in the high seas. Within 10 minutes, *Glowworm* was ablaze. In a valiant last-ditch maneuver, the stricken British destroyer rammed the German cruiser, tearing a 130-foot gash in *Hipper*'s side and ripping away her starboard torpedo tubes. *Glowworm* then sank, taking to the bottom her skipper and all but 31 of her 149-man crew. By the time the British battlecruisers *Repulse* and *Renown* arrived to assist *Glowworm* nearly 50 years ago, the first engagement of the Battle of Narvik was over. The race for Norway, however, had barely begun.

At 0300, April 7, *Gneisenau* had led *Scharnhorst*, *Hipper* and 14 destroyers destined for Narvik and Trondheim away from Lightship "F" in the mouth of Germany's Weser River toward





TOP: The fjords around Narvik were the scene of several naval dramas. After taking the city and sinking two Norwegian warships, the German destroyers were mauled by British destroyers on April 10 (A) and decimated by a more powerful British force on April 13 (B). MIDDLE: A truck is hoisted ashore as the Germans arrive in force to "protect" an unwilling Norway. ABOVE: On April 8, the British destroyer Glowworm *was sunk by the cruiser* Admiral Hipper, *but not before ramming and damaging the German ship.*

Norway. Part of Hitler's Operation *Wesüburg*, this force, along with the battleship *Schleswig-Holstein*, heavy cruiser *Blücher*, pocket battleship *Lützow*, three light cruisers and 8,700 soldiers were to occupy most of Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

In addition to the seaborne invasion troops, two airborne companies would capture Sola and Stavanger airfields in northern Denmark and southern Norway in preparation for the arrival of four battalions from the 69th and 163rd divisions. The daring operation would be supported by 28 U-boats and by the reinforced *Luftwaffe* X Corps.

The resources specifically destined for Narvik included both *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, 2,000 troops of Maj. Gen. Eduard Dietl's 3rd Mountain Division embarked on 10 destroyers and four submarines to protect the landing force from a counter-attack. As soon as the invasion fleet arrived at Vestfjord, the major fjord leading to Narvik, the battleships would turn toward the Arctic before dashing back to Germany, a stratagem intended to avoid confronting overwhelming British naval forces.

German forces ashore would be resupplied and reinforced by tankers and cargo ships but until these vessels arrived, Dietl's troops would have to rely on the meager supplies carried with them aboard the small destroyers and on stocks aboard several steamers disguised as merchantmen that already would have arrived in port.

Aboard the destroyer *Wilhelm Heidkamp*, Dietl accustomed himself to life on a destroyer in Force 8 seas and wondered how his men—and the vital equipment strapped to the destroyers' decks—would fare on the voyage. Meanwhile, U-boat commanders in the North Sea and the Baltic opened sealed envelopes containing their orders for Operation Hartmut, their job to guard the Norwegian coast and sink British warships expected to counter the German invasion.

On the morning of the 8th, the BBC announced that, during the night, British destroyers had laid three minefields in Norwegian waters to prevent German ships from carrying contraband (i.e., iron ore) through the neutral territories.

At 6:50 p.m., April 8, Vice Adm. William Jock Whitworth, aboard the British *Renown*, was ordered to proceed immediately with his destroyers to block the fjords from a German assault. His group earlier had been en route to Narvik, had turned to help *Glowworm* and then resumed the course to Narvik at about 3:30 p.m. Since then, and unbeknownst to Whitworth, his group and the German fleet had been on nearly parallel courses to Narvik, separated by only 30 miles.

Aboard the German ships bound for Narvik the sea took its toll in men and equipment. For most of the transit a southwest gale had blown across the destroyers' port quarters, making life aboard almost unbearable. Men became violently seasick, some were injured, and 10 of Dietl's mountain troops were washed overboard. Dietl, too, came close to being lost when the destroyer he was aboard, the *Wilhelm Heidkamp*, turned turtle and lost her boilers before righting herself.

The German fleet heading for Narvik reached the entrance to Vestfjord at 9 p.m., and the 10 destroyers entered the fjord without contact. *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* then turned into the Arctic as planned and, quite by accident, ran into *Renown* and her destroyer escort at 3:37 a.m., about 50 miles west of the entrance to Vestfjord.

Because of extremely high seas, it took the British battle group nearly a half hour to turn and engage in a "Divisional Concentration Shoot," with *Renown* in the lead and her destroyers trying gamely to keep up while firing at the fleeing German battleships. *Scharnhorst* was hit twice by *Renown*'s 15-inch guns, while the British battlecruiser took one 11-inch round that failed to detonate.

Despite the battleships' lackluster performance, they had successfully lured the closest British warships away from Narvik. The two battleships reached Wilhelmshaven on April 12.

A German battalion moves along a snow-surrounded road behind the cover of a Pzkw I *light tank past a burning house. Narvik was to change hands twice during some of the fiercest fighting of the Norwegian campaign.*

After parting company from the battleships, meanwhile, *Kommodore* Friedrich Bonte led his destroyer flotilla carrying Dietl's 2,000 mountain troops into Vestfjord. The poor weather conditions now worked in the invasion's favor. As one result, the only patrol boat to sight the convoy erroneously reported it as a number of English ships. As Bonte's force advanced, several destroyers left the formation to land troops who captured coastal fortification along the fjord.

Finally, as the remaining three destroyers entered Narvik harbor at 0415, they were confronted by the aging, but still formidable, Norwegian coastal defense ship *Eidsvold.* Bonte dispatched his operations officer to *Eidsvold* to request her surrender. With the request denied, the German party departed. Shortly thereafter, the *Eidsvold* began to train its two 21cm (8.2-inch) guns on the destroyers and was immediately sunk by three torpedoes fired from *Heidkamp.* Exactly 262 of the 270 Norwegian sailors went down with the 40-year-old ship.

As *Eidsvold* settled beneath the waters of the fjord, Bonte's three destroyers discharged troops at Narvik's Post Pier. During the landing, a second Norwegian warship, the *Norge,* appeared through a driving snowstorm. She, too, was sunk, this time by two torpedoes from *Bernd von Arnim,* but only after five others failed to detonate when they passed beneath her.

Norwegian troops in Narvik were taken by surprise and offered no resistance. At 6:15 p.m., Colonel Konrad Sundlo, the military commander of Narvik, surrendered. One group of about 200 soldiers, however, refused to lay down their arms and marched boldly down the railroad tracks that led toward Sweden. When stopped at a German checkpoint, Major Spjeldnaes, the commander of the 1/13th Norwegian Infantry, bid the guards a good day and told them "*Noch marchieren wir*" (We march on), and did. Stunned, the Germans stepped aside.

Dietl's troops occupied the city while the destroyers searched in vain for their resupply ships. Of five such ships, only one—the tanker *Jan Wellem*—had arrived. The other tanker was scuttled after an engagement with a Norwegian warship, and two of three steamers loaded with ground equipment, diesel fuel and ammunition were sunk by surface and submarine action. The third steamer was diverted to Bergen. This left the single tanker *Wellem* to refuel the destroyers from slow onboard pumps while U-boats U-25, 46, 51 and 64 guarded Vestfjord.

That night, British Captain B.A.W. Warburton-Lee arrived outside Vestfjord with his five-ship 2nd Destroyer Flotilla. After a Norwegian harbor pilot told him 10 German destroyers were in Narvik, Warburton-Lee asked the Admiralty for instructions. Told to use his judgment, he responded: "Going into action." Aboard *Hardy,* he led the flotilla into the fjord, hoping to arrive in Narvik harbor at daybreak, about 0400 hours.

In the harbor, *Kommodore* Bonte was told that a large British fleet had arrived. Since the fjord was blanketed in a blinding snowstorm, a night passage of the rock-strewn passage seemed impossible. Nevertheless, German crews spent the night in their clothes.

The *Hardy* charged into the harbor at 0430, launching torpedoes at five German destroyers anchored among the merchantmen. *Hunter* and *Havock* waited outside the narrow harbor entrance while *Hotspur* and *Hostile* turned north and entered the Herjangsfjord. Despite prior warning, the Germans were taken by surprise and could only respond with a few light-caliber guns before *Hardy* dashed out of the harbor entrance. By then, *Wilhelm Heidkamp* was ablaze and sinking, and *Kommodore* Bonte was dead.

No sooner had *Hardy* cleared the harbor when her companion *Hunter* dashed in, firing eight torpedoes and her deck gun. As she left, *Havock* entered and launched three torpedoes that struck two merchantmen and sank the *Anton Schmitt*. Within 16 minutes, two German destroyers were gone; another, the *Dieter von Roeder*, was damaged, and the attackers were untouched.

As the 2nd Flotilla turned toward the mouth of the fjord, three German destroyers joined the battle from the main fjord and two more came hurrying up from the southwest. By 0550 a general melee had developed in Vestfjord about four miles west from Narvik.

Hardy took a torpedo from *Georg Thiele*, under *Korvettenkapittän* M.E. Wolff, and went aground on the south side of the fjord. Captain Warburton-Lee died in a raft while being taken to shore. Then, in one of the many barbaric acts that marked World War II, the German *Thiele* fired on other survivors as they scrambled up the beach.

Meanwhile, the remaining four British destroyers made smoke and exchanged torpedoes with the Germans. The *Hunter* and *Hotspur* were hit by gunfire that left *Hunter* dead in the water. In the smoke, she was rammed at 0615 by *Hotspur* and sank. *Hostile* and *Havock* saw the collision and came alongside, taking *Hotspur* in tow as they retreated down Vestfjord. The battle had ended almost as suddenly as it had begun—almost.

As the flotilla continued out of the fjord, the British happened upon the German resupply ship *Rauenfels* heading toward Narvik. *Hostile*, acting as guard for the two destroyers in tow, engaged *Rauenfels* with her last torpedo and sank her. When the destroyers cleared the fjord at about 0930, they rejoined the main British fleet, composed of *Renown* and *Repulse*, the cruiser *Penelope*, and the destroyers *Bedouin*, *Eskimo*, *Punjabi*, *Kimberley*, *Greyhound*, *Esk*, *Impulsive*, *Icarus* and *Ivanhoe*. With their portion of the battle over, the three damaged destroyers made for repairs in England. For his gallantry in what came to be known as the First Battle of Narvik, Captain Warburton-Lee posthumously received England's highest award, the Victoria Cross.

The morning's battle had been costly, especially for the Germans. *Anton Schmitt* and *Wilhelm Heidkamp* were sunk with 131 men, including *Kommodore* Bonte. *Diether von Roeder* and *Bernd von Arnim* were immobilized and unseaworthy. *Hans Lüdemann* and *Georg Thiele* were severely damaged. The remaining destroyers, *Hermann Künne*, *Wolfgang Zenker*, *Erich Giese* and *Erich Koellner*, were undamaged but had expended half their ammunition.

With the arrival of the British battleship *Warspite*, the Second Battle of Narvik would begin around noon on the 13th, preceded on the 12th by an air strike from the carrier *Furious*. At 4:15 p.m., nine open-cockpit, cloth-covered Swordfish torpedo biplanes from Lt. Cmdr. P.G. Sydney-Turner's 818 Squadron were launched. A U-boat in Vestfjord sighted the approaching planes and warned the ships and ground troops at Narvik. When the Swordfish reached the target, they proved no match for antiaircraft batteries aboard the destroyers, as well as several established ashore with guns salvaged from *Heidkamp* and *Diether von Roeder*. Two Swordfish were shot down, and the remainder returned to *Furious* without striking any of the warships.

The Germans knew a major seaborne attack was imminent and set out to ambush the fleet with U-boats and the able destroyers remaining to them. Aboard *Warspite*, Captain V.A.C. Crutchley and his fleet commander, Vice Adm. Jock Whitworth, were also aware that the Germans would be waiting and, before moving into the fjord on the 13th, launched one of their Swordfish to spot for the fleet. Then the order was passed, and the force moved ahead behind destroyer screens.

As *Warspite* moved up the fjord, she was sighted by the U-46. Luckily for Whitworth, the sub hit a submerged rock during her attack run and was forced to retreat. Farther up the fjord, the airborne spotter, Lt. Cmdr. W.L.M. Brown, found several destroyers and informed the battleship of their positions before reconnoitering the harbor. On his return, Brown sighted a second submarine, U-64, near Herjangsfjord, north of Narvik, and attacked, sinking the submarine—the first U-boat to be sunk from the air.

Fifteen minutes after U-46's aborted attack on *Warspite*, the British fleet passed the wreck of the *Rauenfels* and, at 12:51 p.m., found *Hans Lüdemann* and *Wolfgang Zenker* zigzagging the width of the fjord. The two ships were taken under fire by the lead destroyers and by *Warspite* from a range of 10 miles. After launching several torpedo salvos that missed their marks, the two German destroyers escaped unharmed to Narvik. A few minutes later, the Swordfish aircraft reported *Erich Koellner* lying beneath cliffs in a cove just south of the flotilla. She was immediately attacked and sunk by *Bedouin*, *Eskimo* and *Punjabi*, helped by two 15-inch shells from *Warspite*.

Now, with Narvik harbor in sight, the battle began in earnest—destroyers exchanging torpedoes and gunfire while *Warspite* fired salvo after salvo. Yet, despite all the activity, the only ship to take a direct hit was the German destroyer *Erich Giese*, stranded halfway between Narvik harbor and the narrow Rombaksfjord, about three miles to the north.

By 2 p.m., the Germans were nearly out of ammunition. Faced with the futility of continued combat in the main fjord, four of their destroyers dropped smoke pots and ran for Rombaksfjord. The British destroyer *Eskimo*, aided by another Swordfish spotter, led a five-ship charge behind them. Meanwhile, in Herjangsfjord—across the main fjord from Narvik—the *Hermann Künne* was intentionally driven aground to save her crew. Her scuttling charges had just gone off when she, too, was struck by a torpedo.

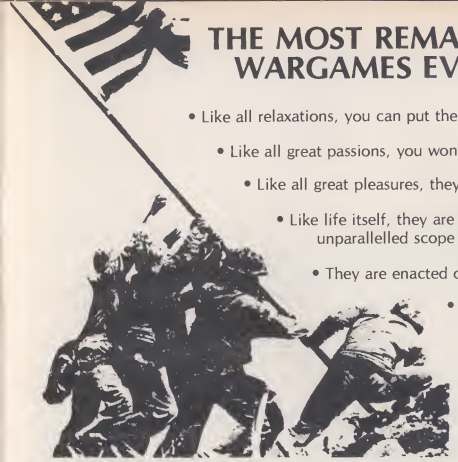
In Rombaksfjord, *Georg Thiele* blocked a narrow passage while *Bernd von Arnim*, *Hans Lüdemann* and *Wolfgang Zenker* landed their crews and scuttled at the fjord's end. *Eskimo*, warned of *Thiele*'s position by the spotter plane, cautiously emerged through the narrows and, in the ensuing exchange of torpedo and gunfire, disabled the German just as *Hero* and *Forester* joined in the action.

The Second Battle of Narvik ended with minor damage to two British destroyers but with half of Germany's destroyer fleet littering the fjords. Thus, the Royal Navy controlled the fjords, but German troops still held Narvik. Dietl ordered Narvik evacuated at 3 p.m., because of the imminent threat of an Allied landing, but reoccupied the city at 7 p.m., when *Warspite* unexpectedly left the harbor. Every time the battleship appeared in the harbor, Dietl began to withdraw his forces again.

While the warships dueled in the fjords around Narvik, Allied troops under Maj. Gen. Piers Mackesy were already on their way to relieve Norway. The 24th Guards Brigade, composed of the 1st Scots Guard, 1st Irish Guard and 2nd South Wales Borderers, as well as the 146th Brigade, two battalions of French *Chasseurs Alpins*, a French Foreign Legion brigade from Algiers and a demi-brigade of Polish infantry, had sailed from Greenock, Scotland, on April 12.

The first Allied troops went ashore on the 14th at Harstad, about 60 miles northwest of Narvik. On the 15th, more Allied forces landed 160 miles southwest of Narvik at Mo, followed on the 16th and 18th with landings at Namos and Andalsnes, farther down the coast near Trondheim. On the 26th and 27th, a battalion of Welsh Borderers and three battalions of French *Chasseurs Alpins* reinforced in the area near Harstad.

For weeks, Allied forces concentrated around Narvik while German aircraft harassed them almost daily from bases far to the south at Aalborg in Denmark and the newly captured airfield at Sola on the southwestern tip of Norway.



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TOP: A pre-Dreadnought of 1902 vintage, the Norwegian battleship Norge *was sunk by torpedoes from the German destroyer* Bernd von Arnim, *while her sister,* Eidsvold, *fell victim to* Wilhelm Heidkamp. *MIDDLE: French troops advance across a railroad cutting outside Narvik. ABOVE: The Allies secured Narvik on May 27, 1940, but the victory was short-lived. France was falling, and the German 21st Army Group was advancing from Oslo, forcing the Allies to evacuate. Here, German tanks are ferried across a fjord.*

It was not until May 27, six weeks after the first of 24,500 Allied troops arrived in the vicinity of Narvik, that Lord Cork ordered the final assault on Narvik. Supported by land-based fighters and naval gunfire from the cruiser *Southampton*, British, Polish and French soldiers then swept into Narvik from the north and south and across the fjord in landing craft. Despite a counterattack by *Luftwaffe* Stukas, by 11 a.m., the 2,000 German defenders had been rolled back. At 5 p.m., the Allied advance stopped to allow a Norwegian battalion the honor of re-entering Narvik first. The battle officially ended at 8 o'clock.

The victory would be short-lived, however, since elsewhere the war had engulfed Europe and plans were already under way for the evacuation of Allied forces from Norway. After the May 10 German invasion of France and the low Countries, with lead elements of a German Armored Corps contacting British forces near Dunkirk, on May 22 the Defense Council was meeting with Winston Churchill to determine the disposition of the forces in Norway. On the 24th, Lord Cork was ordered to evacuate Narvik and bring his troops back for the defense of England.

While most of the world watched with fascination as the Allies evacuated more than 38,000 troops from Dunkirk in only eight days, in Norway the German 21st Army Group advanced from Oslo toward Trondheim and Narvik. To save 6,000 Allied troops in Trondheim and Namsos from envelopment, the British High Command ordered them evacuated on the nights of May 30 and June 1—the first phase of the general withdrawal from Norway. However, intense dive-bomb attacks drove the supporting aircraft carriers *Ark Royal* and *Glorious* away from the harbor, and the evacuation was delayed for 24 hours.

Meanwhile, 24,500 Allied troops remained in Harstad and Narvik. Fifteen troop ships, escorts, and the carriers *Ark Royal* and *Glorious* rendezvoused 180 miles off the coast and prepared to go to Narvik two at a time to pick up the men. Fifteen thousand troops departed in a six-ship convoy on June 7, and the remaining 10,000 boarded seven transports on the morning of the 8th. The last forces to leave were a rear guard of *Chasseurs Alpins*, British engineers and control personnel and the various Allied commanders. Later on the 8th, Dietl recaptured a deserted Narvik.

The carriers were provided to assist the 46 and 263 squadrons at Bardufoss establish air supremacy during the evacuation. However, as the evacuation progressed, ground-based pilots saw the carriers as alternatives to destroying their aircraft and suggested that they be allowed to land aboard the ships. The major obstacle that faced them was that none of the pilots had ever made a carrier landing and their planes were not designed to do so. On the night of June 7, the two squadrons left Bardufoss and, guided by a carrier-based Fairey Swordfish from the *Glorious*, flew out to meet the carrier. Remarkably, all 10 Gladiators and eight Hurricanes landed without serious incident and were lashed to the deck for the trip home.

Although the German surface navy had been inactive since losing one-half its destroyer fleet at Narvik, the interlude had been well-spent repairing damaged ships and planning Operation Juno to intercept the British Home Fleet. On June 6, the Naval Staff ordered Juno executed and, at 0800, *Gneisenau, Scharnhorst, Hipper, Lützow, Admiral Scheer* and three destroyers left Kiel for the North Sea.

Aboard *Glorious*, a converted World War I battlecruiser (and sister ship to *Courageous*, which was sunk off Ireland by U-29 during the opening days of the war), the skipper received orders to proceed immediately for England. His flight deck was crowded with the additional land-based planes which made flight operations impossible, and so, with an escort of two destroyers and a tanker, Captain W.T. Makeig-Jones set course for Scapa Flow.

The securing of Norway was the greatest combined land-air-sea operation carried out by the Germans during World War II. Their victory gained important bases as well as Norwegian iron ore, but cost one third of the Navy's surface fleet.

On the afternoon of June 8, *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Lützow* and *Scheer* found *Glorious* and her escorts. The two British destroyers valiantly made smoke and charged the superior German force while the carrier tried in vain to escape. In a battle that took only minutes to play out, *Glorious* and her escorts went down, taking with them all but 43 of the 1,515 men aboard, including all the pilots from Bardufoss.

During the brief exchange, however, the destroyer *Acasta* hit *Scharnhorst* with a torpedo that blew a hole in her side 60 feet long and caused the battleship to retire to Trondheim for repairs. Ten days later, while clearing a path for the crippled *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* was torpedoed by the British submarine *Clyde*. The engagement cost the battleship a goodly portion of her bow and forced her out of action for the next three months.

This was the final significant action for the control of Narvik and Norway. Hitler eventually stationed 3,000 men in Norway to guard against another Allied invasion that never came.

Britain lost one aircraft carrier, two cruisers, nine destroyers, six submarines, 17 auxiliary ships and 112 aircraft, counting those aboard *Glorious*. Another five cruisers and eight destroyers were seriously damaged. French and Polish forces lost one destroyer and submarine each, and the French cruiser *Emile Bertin* was badly damaged. Norway lost two capital ships and practically all of its smaller vessels and submarines.

German losses, while about equal in number to those of the British, totalled nearly one-third of the entire German surface fleet and were never fully replaced. During the campaign, one heavy cruiser, two light cruisers, 10 destroyers, 8 submarines, 24 auxiliaries, and 127 aircraft were lost. In addition, both of her battlecruisers, a pocket battleship, and two heavy cruisers were damaged.

The German success in ensuring Hitler a supply of iron ore, as well as maintaining valuable air, sea and land bases along the strategic Scandinavian coastline, came at a high cost—crippling Germany's fleet. After Narvik, Germany could no longer challenge England's control of the seas. To memorialize the campaign's high cost, Germany gave the name *Narvikclass* to the ships that replaced those lost in Norway. The German military also instituted a series of campaign badges, the first being the *Narvikschild* that was awarded to the 8,577 men who participated in the Norway campaign between April 9 and June 9, 1940.

Narvik was the first time Germany defied the overwhelming supremacy of the British fleet. By using surprise, concentrated airpower at crucial moments, and aided by a large modicum of luck in the forms of terrible weather and Allied procrastination, the German Naval Staff achieved notable success that violated most contemporary strategy but achieved its objective.

Perhaps the most important "first" of the Narvik campaign, however, was the reliance by both sides on combined operations—that is, coordinating air and land forces to achieve maximum military force at an objective. This lesson, first practiced in, around, and over Norway's fjords, has become the keystone of all modern warfare. □

Author Lawrence M. Greenberg is an active duty officer in the U.S. Army with recent experience at the Defense Nuclear Agency, Army Center of Military History, and the Defense Intelligence Agency. For more detailed information on the Battle of Narvik, he recommends Captain Peter Dickens' Narvik: Battles in the Fjords *(Naval Institute Press, 1974) and Johan Waage's* The Narvik Campaign *(George Harrap and Co., 1964).*

Plowing through rough seas, an American destroyer performs one of its numerous duties in the Pacific. Throughout 1943, the "tins cans" played a deadly cat-and-mouse game with their Japanese counterparts in the Solomons, with the Japanese generally coming out ahead—until the startling engagement at Vella Gulf on Aug. 6, 1943.

Clean Sweep By Destroyers

Venturing into Vella Gulf in search of the "Tokyo Express" were American destroyers—on the prowl by themselves for a change and eager to challenge the Japanese at their specialty of night battle.

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...the beginning of August 1943, the battle for the Solo... confidence in the special abilities of the American sailor. He ...panese—and he felt he had the man ...

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...UGUST 6 PROCEED VELLA GULF S. OF ...A TO ARRIVE GIZO STRAIT 2200 AND ...F NO ENEMY CONTACT MADE BY 0200 ...T.

Adm. Theodore S. Wilkinson considered how best to end the nighttime supply runs. He had just replaced Admiral Kelly Turner as commander of the Third Amphibious Force—now the Tokyo Express was Wilkinson's problem. And, as the sunken hulks dotting Ironbottom Sound reminded, there were many perils to meeting the Japanese in night engagements. A former Director of Naval Intelligence, Wilkinson knew how capable the Imperial Japanese Navy was. But he knew, too, the capabilities of the U.S. Navy, and he had considerable

This meant something was up for sure! Further, the message said the PT-boats would go to Kula Gulf—that meant that the destroyers were going to have first shot at any enemy in their sweep area. So far, the colorful PT-boats had not been very successful in halting the Japanese barge traffic. Only three nights earlier, Wilkinson and others had been wondering how effective they really were. Fifteen MTBs encountered four Japanese destroyers, with mass confusion resulting. While firing a total of 30 torpedoes, the only damage they achieved was

Plowing through rough seas, an American destroyer performs one of its numerous duties in the Pacific. Throughout 1943, the "tins cans" played a deadly cat-and-mouse game with their Japanese counterparts in the Solomons, with the Japanese generally coming out ahead—until the startling engagement at Vella Gulf on Aug. 6, 1943.

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By Rex A. Knight

By the beginning of August 1943, the battle for the Solomon Islands had been raging for almost exactly a year, a difficult period of great victories and tragic losses for both the Imperial Japanese Navy and its American counterpart. The cost in lives and materiel had been immense, with the waters in and around the Solomons made into a graveyard of ships.

In August of 1943, moreover, it was a battle still being fought, not yet done.

It all began, of course, with the initial landings of American troops on Guadalcanal in August of 1942. The Japanese lost no time in adopting a re-supply operation—consisting of high-speed transports, destroyers, submarines and barges—in order to regain territory lost to the Americans. Only successful in part, this re-supply effort failed, with the grimly determined Americans finally calling Guadalcanal theirs after six months of bitter fighting.

Not yet ready to quit the Southwest Pacific, the Japanese mounted a remarkable, largely nighttime evacuation of thousands of troops stranded on Guadalcanal in early 1943. Their navy then continued its nightly runs of troops and supplies to various beleaguered forces scattered in the islands of the Central Solomons.

Bloody Guadalcanal had only been a beginning, and now the U.S. Navy had to halt the "Tokyo Express" and related re-supply efforts, or see the battle for the Solomons drag on for possibly months more.

At his headquarters at Koli Point on Guadalcanal, Rear Adm. Theodore S. Wilkinson considered how best to end the nighttime supply runs. He had just replaced Admiral Kelly Turner as commander of the Third Amphibious Force—now the Tokyo Express was Wilkinson's problem. And, as the sunken hulks dotting Ironbottom Sound reminded, there were many perils to meeting the Japanese in night engagements. A former Director of Naval Intelligence, Wilkinson knew how capable the Imperial Japanese Navy was. But he knew, too, the capabilities of the U.S. Navy, and he had considerable confidence in the special abilities of the American sailor. He felt ready to meet the Japanese—and he felt he had the man to do the job.

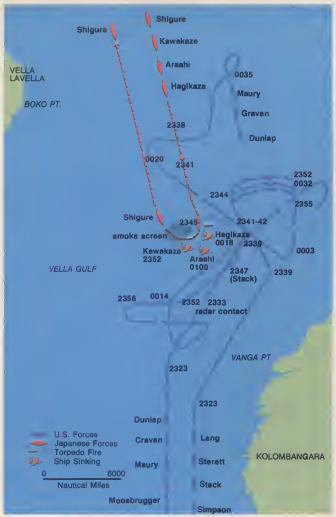
On August 4, Wilkinson met with Commander Frederick Moosbrugger, along with officers from the American motor torpedo boats in the area. Moosbrugger was commander of Destroyer Division 12 and overall commander of Task Group 31.2, which consisted of eight destroyers of Destroyer Divisions 12 and 15. It was Wilkinson's plan to have Moosbrugger's destroyers coordinate with the motor torpedo boats (PT-boats) in clearing the Vella Gulf area of Japanese barge (*Daihatsus*) and destroyer traffic.

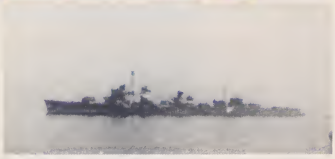
The next morning Moosbrugger met once again with the motor torpedo boat representatives and with Commander Roger Simpson, to discuss and formulate a plan to take back to Wilkinson. Simpson, commander of Destroyer Division 15 but second to Moosbrugger, was every bit as eager as Moosbrugger to turn loose his destroyers on the Japanese. It appeared a great opportunity to have their destroyers free to hunt their prey, rather than act as screens for larger ships, as had been the case for the past year and a half.

Hardly had a combined operational plan been devised by the group when a dispatch from Wilkinson provided the opportunity for action. It read in part:

DEPART/TULAGI 1230 AUGUST 6 PROCEED VELLA GULF S. OF RUSSELLS AND RENDOVA TO ARRIVE GIZO STRAIT 2200 AND MAKE SWEEP OF GULF. IF NO ENEMY CONTACT MADE BY 0200 RETURN DOWN THE SLOT.

This meant something was up for sure! Further, the message said the PT-boats would go to Kula Gulf—that meant that the destroyers were going to have first shot at any enemy in their sweep area. So far, the colorful PT-boats had not been very successful in halting the Japanese barge traffic. Only three nights earlier, Wilkinson and others had been wondering how effective they really were. Fifteen MTBs encountered four Japanese destroyers, with mass confusion resulting. While firing a total of 30 torpedoes, the only damage they achieved was





TOP: Commander Frederick Moosbrugger combined flexible use of his destroyer formations, new smokeless powder and radar to achieve an element of near-perfect surprise against Captain Kaju Sugiura's "Tokyo Express." MIDDLE: Seen from a sister ship, a Kagero*-class destroyer sets out on an "express" run. For much of the war, the* Kageros *and their similar cousins were the finest warships of their type in the world. ABOVE: Seen at speed on trials,* Arashi *was part of Sugiura's division on the night of August 6-7.*

a bent propeller on the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri* after she had plowed through and sunk Lieutenant John F. Kennedy's PT-109. Thus, Wilkinson decided to keep the MTBs at a safe distance and allow Moosbrugger and his destroyers full rein.

Shortly after the first dispatch, a second dispatch was received by Moosbrugger directing him to report to Wilkinson's headquarters. He immediately set out aboard his flagship destroyer *Dunlap* for Koli Point.

Wilkinson said he suspected the Japanese would reinforce the Vella area around midnight of August 6. He suspected, too, they would use destroyers and possibly a cruiser to do the job. With all available U.S. cruisers either too damaged or too far away to be of any significant assistance, it would be up to Moosbrugger's destroyers to stop the Japanese. Wilkinson also pointed out the lessons of previous night engagements against the Japanese. With their phenomenal ability to spot enemy ships first, without the use of radar, and their ability to launch their "long lance" torpedoes at greater distances, no operation of this type would be without a considerable amount of danger. Also, there was the possibility that at least one of the enemy ships might have radar as well. Every precaution would have to be taken.

Moosbrugger, based upon his own earlier conference, was able to provide his chief with an outline to a general plan of action for the following night. Wilkinson directed him to follow the course cited in the earlier dispatch, but said that after entering Vella Gulf, Moosbrugger would be free to take any action deemed necessary.

On the morning of August 6, Moosbrugger invited Simpson to join him for breakfast—they would put the finishing touches to the plan to be presented to the commanding officers of the six destroyers from the two divisions that would participate in the night's action. Those destroyers were *Dunlap, Craven* and *Maury* of DesDiv 12, and *Lang, Sterett* and *Stack* of DesDiv 15.

DesDiv 12 had spent months training in night torpedo tactics, and each ship was carrying extra torpedo mounts for greater firepower. Simpson's DesDiv 15 was well-trained in the art of gunnery and carried newly installed, twin 40mm gun mounts that could easily handle heavily armed barges. Now, they would soon see if their training would pay off.

The plan sounded simple enough, although its execution might prove more difficult. After entering Vella Gulf, the two divisions would divide into two columns. Moosbrugger's division would be the lead column, while Simpson's would form some distance to the right behind Moosbrugger's. There would be a reduction in speed to reduce the visibility of their wakes, and they would stay close to the shoreline to make it more difficult for the enemy to detect them, either visually or with radar.

If enemy destroyers were encountered, Moosbrugger's division would make the initial attack with torpedoes. Immediately afterward, Simpson's division would follow up with gunnery and torpedoes. If, after a complete search of the area, the anticipated Japanese destroyers were not located, the divisions would concentrate on any barge traffic found. If nothing could be located by the predetermined hour, set by Wilkinson, the two divisions would return to their base.

Moosbrugger informed his task force destroyer commanders that there were many things to be considered. Enemy submarines might be encountered, but no mines. They should be alert to enemy motor torpedo boat attacks and/or to heavily armed barges around Gizo Island, Blackett Strait and close to the western shore of Kolombangara Island. Further, should the enemy destroyers approach from the north through Vella Gulf to the area of Vanga Point, Sandfly Harbor, Tongo, or Blackett Strait, a cruiser might be present as well.

Overall, the Americans would have to take advantage of the element of surprise, then hit hard and fast, with coordi-

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The destroyer Stack *finished off the burning* Kawakaze *with four torpedoes. Also sunk that night were* Arashi *and Captain Sugiura's flagship,* Hagikaze. *Only Captain Tameichi Hara's* Shigure, *at the rear of the Japanese column, escaped unscathed.*

nated attacks, in order to have full effect. At 11:30 a.m., Moosbrugger's Task Group 31.2 departed Purvis Bay, leaving one hour ahead of schedule because *Maury* could only limp along at a reduced speed of 27 knots. As the ships passed through Ironbottom Sound, they made an "S" turn in salute to the dead there; their crews hoped that the night would not bring them the same destiny.

Even as Moosbrugger's ships were leaving Tulagi, Captain Kaju Sugiura, on his flagship destroyer *Hagikaze,* was herding along a squadron of four destroyers that were carrying 900 soldiers and 50 tons of supplies to Japanese troops on the island of Kolombangara.

By 11:30 a.m., they were located north of Bougainville heading southeast at high speed, three of the ships doing the "carrying" and one destroyer lagging as a rear guard. *Hagikaze* and *Arashi* were the two lead ships in the column. They were both of the Kagero Class, the newest and best in the Imperial Japanese Navy. Bigger than the other destroyers, they boasted a length of 388 feet and displacement of more than 2,000 tons. But they carried no radar. *Kawakaze* and "rear guard" *Shigure,* were both of the Shiratsuyu Class. They were smaller and equivalent to Moosbrugger's destroyers in almost every way. Like the others in their column, however, they carried no radar.

At noon, an American search plane spotted Sugiura's destroyers in column and proceeding south by west, north of Buka. Sugiura knew that he had been spotted, but decided to proceed as planned. He expected that only motor torpedo boats might stand in his way.

Four hours later, Moosbrugger received the search plane's report—there was not much doubt now that there would be action that night.

Shortly before 8 p.m., while passing south of Rendova Island, Moosbrugger ran into a rain squall which totally blotted out the shoreline. He continued on at speed, using radar and soundings.

At about 10 p.m., Moosbrugger's ships reached a predesignated point, "Point Option," and reduced speed to 15 knots. They changed course to 50 degrees and entered Gizo Strait, to begin a careful, systematic search of the area for the enemy. Moosbrugger's DesDiv 12 was the lead column, and DesDiv 15 was at 150 degrees to starboard, distance about 4,000 yards. Twenty-eight minutes later, both columns came right simultaneously to course 124 degrees, in order to sweep the reefs fringing Gizo Island and the approach to Blackett Strait.

The weather had now cleared, but it was an extremely dark night. Visibility was from between 3,000 to 4,000 yards. The sea was almost icy smooth. The eerie darkness only added to the apprehension of each man as he stood at his battle station—as added reason for apprehension, however, the Black Cat patrol planes promised to Moosbrugger had been hampered by foul weather and were experiencing radar trouble. They would be of no help to the destroyers.

With the Black Cats unavailable, all of the information needed to proceed would now come from the CIC (Combat Information Center) on each ship. Since all of the destroyers with Moosbrugger had been built just before the introduction of radar, none was equipped with a special area to be used as the CIC. Instead, makeshift CICs had been placed within each captain's emergency cabin, located just behind the bridge. With the executive officer in charge, a radarman, soundman and one or two assistants worked in extremely

cramped quarters gathering and sending all information needed by those on the bridge to conduct the operation. In the next hour and a half, those same CICs would become the most important and busiest place on all six ships.

Still in battle formation, the ships changed course once again at 10:56 to 000 degrees, closely following the shoreline of Kolombangara. Twenty-two minutes later *Dunlap* made a radar contact. Moosbrugger reported over TBS (Talk Between Ships), "Surface contact ninety degrees true, range 4,060."

The contact seemed to be a good one, but no other ships in the column had it. At 11:23, Moosbrugger changed course to 30 degrees and increased speed to 25 knots. The "contact," still reported by *Dunlap,* did the same—and so proved itself to be a phantom contact. It was discarded.

At 11:33, *Dunlap* picked up a new contact, bearing 359 degrees true, at a range of 23,900 yards. Moosbrugger once again called for verification from the other ships. In the meantime, at 20,000 yards, two large and distinct targets appeared on the radar screen. At 19,000 yards, three targets appeared, on course 180 degrees true, with a speed of 25 knots.

At 11:36, *Craven* verified the contact. Moosbrugger gave the order over TBS for DesDiv 12 to prepare to fire full port torpedoes broadside, and to swing to course 335 degrees to bring his ships to the computed torpedo firing point.

As the initial targets closed to 15,000 yards, four distinct targets now appeared on the radar screen. The enemy ships were in one column, on course 180 degrees, cruising at a speed of 26 knots.

The excitement could be felt as the radarman on *Dunlap* shouted, "Four in a column—I see 'em—I see 'em!" Moosbrugger and Sugiura were now closing at a combined speed of about 50 knots.

At 11:40, the torpedo officer aboard *Dunlap* announced the track angle at 290. Moosbrugger gave the order to "execute." One minute later, his DesDiv 12 fired 24 torpedoes at a range between 4,820 and 4,300 yards to the target. The visibility was still under 4,000 yards and no lookouts from either division had yet sighted any ships.

As Moosbrugger was pronouncing his attack order, across the darkness a lookout on *Hagikaze*, searching to port, spotted a shadowy form against the misty Kolombangara coastline. Seconds later, a lookout on *Arashi* reported a motor torpedo boat at the same bearing. *Shigure* also reported a wake on the port bow. Suddenly, with erroneous report, *Kawakaze* signaled a motor torpedo boat sighted off her starboard bow, an error that caused all to momentarily turn their attention to a harmless quarter at the very moment Moosbrugger's torpedoes shot from their tubes.

All ships from DesDiv 12 reported their torpedoes away at 11:44. Immediately afterward, Moosbrugger ordered a 90-degree turn to starboard in order to evade possible enemy torpedo fire. At the same time, Simpson ordered his DesDiv 15 to change course to 270 degrees and then to 190 degrees, thus capping the enemy 'T'.

Normally, the Japanese lookouts would have spotted the burning impulse powder in the torpedo tubes as Moosbrugger's ships fired, but the tubes had all been recently fitted with new flash-hiders. To avoid the disappointment of having torpedoes hit their target, then fail to detonate, Moosbrugger had ordered the often faulty magnetic-influence detonators on the torpedoes disconnected, setting them for contact only. Now, as far as Moosbrugger knew, he had gotten off the first shots, now it was up to Simpson to follow through with his part.

Back across the darkness, a lookout on *Hagikaze* suddenly spotted Moosbrugger's destroyers swinging rapidly to starboard. With his report, torpedomen on *Hagikaze* desperately worked in an effort to open their torpedo valves. Aboard *Shigure*, Captain Tameichi Hara began shouting orders to his

TOP: Commander Frederick Moosbrugger, leader of DesDiv 12, on the bridge of his flagship, the USS Dunlap. *Drilling his men relentlessly in night-fighting tactics, Moosbrugger earned the distinction of being the first to beat the "express" at its own game. ABOVE: An American destroyer adds its gunfire to the torpedo-inflicted carnage at Vella Gulf.*

men to take "torpedo action to port." But caught in an unusual state of unpreparedness, *Shigure*'s torpedo officer found his director operator sleeping, his post manned by an assistant, with the torpedo crew away on lookout duty. Yet he recovered quickly, managing to set off a hurried salvo of eight torpedoes by 11:45, though too late to catch Moosbrugger.

To the crews in the American destroyers, meanwhile, two minutes dragged by—an eternity. *Dunlap*'s sound operator reported, "Hear torpedo explosion." Yet nothing was seen visually. Everyone seemed puzzled. They should have seen first, before hearing! What could be wrong? Suddenly, three terrific explosions were observed in succession from left to

TOP: Japanese troops and supplies come ashore somewhere in the Solomons. The fast destroyers of the Tokyo Express combined with the slower-moving barges to bring such reinforcements to Japan's island bastions by night. ABOVE: The crew of USS Lang, *DesDiv 15's flagship, relaxes shortly after the battle of Vella Gulf.*

right, followed by seven to 10 quick, violent explosions. It appeared that three ships were hit, one so large it was thought to be a cruiser—it was engulfed in red flame and boiling black smoke. Some distance away an American photoreconnaissance plane reported seeing four fires that appeared to be on the shore of Vella LaVella. Weather prevented a closer look, but as the plane turned away, two crew members aft saw large explosions from two of the fires. The motor torpedo boats on station at Kula Gulf also saw three large explosions.

On board *Hagakaze* and *Arashi*, lookouts simultaneously had seen the torpedo wakes, but too late. None of the Japanese ships had time to react and all were hit, except the lucky *Shigure*, behind, to the rear. *Arashi*, hit by as many as three torpedoes, burst into a violent inferno. The surface of the water around her was covered by burning oil—incinerating survivors and illuminating the area. For the Japanese, the night had turned into horror and chaos.

Immediately after the torpedoes hit, Simpson, from his flagship *Lang*, ordered DesDiv 15 to open up with its five-inch guns. This fire was concentrated first on *Kawakaze*, west of the burning *Arashi*. An early hit produced a bright yellow glow on *Kawakaze*. The destroyer *Stack* fired four torpedoes into the target and, at 11:51 p.m., *Kawakaze* capsized and sank.

One minute later Moosbrugger's division changed course to 180 degrees to join in the gunfire. Two pips were evident on his radar screen, one being the burning *Arashi* and the other, *Shigure*, now maneuvering to escape. Moosbrugger ordered *Dunlap* to open fire, directing its 5-inch guns at *Shigure*, south and left of the burning *Arashi*. *Craven* and *Maury* joined in the barrage. *Maury* ceased fire after the first salvo since all three ships of DesDiv 12 suffered the loss of their SG (Sugar George) radar from the shock of their 5-inch guns. As the other U.S. ships continued to fire, *Maury* used her radar (which had been quickly reset) for the entire division. Simpson's division also began to concentrate fire on the same target.

The *Shigure* turned on her chemical smoke and took to her heels. Her gunners made a feeble effort to return fire, without any effect. As she sped away, she was hit by a few rounds from her pursuers, but Hara succeeded in getting *Shigure* out of range of Moosbrugger's and Simpson's guns. Hara's escape was so clean that, as Moosbrugger's two divisions broke off the attack, the Americans thought the enemy ship had been sunk. To the contrary, within a very few days, *Shigure* would be back in action again.

At 12:03 a.m., Moosbrugger's division moved to take up position near the northwest entrance to Vella Gulf to intercept any fresh enemy forces that might try to enter. Simpson ordered his division to begin "mopping up." Both divisions continued to fire intermittent rounds into the stubborn *Arashi* as she continued to burn. Suddenly, a terrific explosion erupted and threw a tremendous spout of fire into the air. It was seen miles away by the crews of the motor torpedo boats at Kula Gulf. But the twisted, burning hulk of *Arashi* continued to stay afloat.

As Moosbrugger's division was moving by the burning wreckage of *Arashi*, his crewmen at last spotted another disabled destroyer silhouetted by the flames. Before Moosbrugger could bring his guns to bear, Simpson's division smothered the target in a blistering burst of 5-inch fire. On board the *Lang*, the barrels became so hot they began to glow red, and the black powder smoke began to hang low around the ship.

The devastating fire obliterated the topside of the target, from forward to aft. A salvo from *Sterett* blew up the target's magazines—*Hagikaze* sank stern first in a matter of seconds.

Simpson radioed Moosbrugger at 12:20 informing him that his division was going to fire six torpedoes at the remains of what he and his men still believed to be a burning cruiser, actually *Arashi*. In response, Moosbrugger changed course to clear the area. Two minutes later, DesDiv 15 fired a salvo of six torpedoes at what was left of the burning hulk. Five minutes later the radar screens reported all clear.

The two divisions formed up at 12:32 and made two course changes, then began to circle the still burning, oil-covered water where the enemy ships had been sunk. They might yet rescue survivors. The men aboard the American destroyers stared out at the carnage in a state of awe and silence. It looked to many as though they had sailed into the middle of Hell. Flames from burning oil lit up yards of floating debris and bodies. Black smoke smothered the already eerie darkness; the putrid smell of burning oil and sulfur from the gunfire filled the air. It was not a night to soon be forgotten by either victor or the few surviving vanquished.

At 1:15, *Maury* reported the bearing in her main feed pump was burned out, and that her present speed could only be maintained for one more hour at best. Moosbrugger decided to retire down the "slot" with his two divisions at 22 knots (*Maury*'s maximum speed). After leaving, it was decided that Simpson should return to the area of the battle and pick up one survivor for intelligence gathering.

As Simpson returned, the water was still flaming from the burning oil. The *Lang* moved quietly through the area as cries and screams again rose up from out of the darkness. All hands were ordered to keep quiet, in hopes the survivors would think they were a Japanese ship coming to her rescue. The Japanese sailor had proven himself in the past to be just as stubborn about surrender as his army counterpart—and also just as dangerous. With their suicidal nature, no Japanese survivor could be trusted, thus the reason for Moosbrugger's order to only pick up one.

One of Moosbrugger's ships checks for the possible presence of an enemy submarine in Dwight C. Shepler's painting, Craven Scouts a Contact. *After ambushing Sugiura's column,* Craven *took part in the chase after* Shigure.

As an extra precaution, Simpson ordered armed sailors to one station at midship to pick up the survivor. Nowhere else were survivors to be allowed to come aboard.

When one Japanese survivor tried to climb up *Lang*'s screw guard, a sailor on the fantail picked up an empty 5-inch shell casing and hurled it with all his might. The heavy casing slammed into the Japanese survivor, knocking him back into the water—and probably putting an end to his life.

Other survivors could be seen at some distance away from the ship, one could be heard shouting "*banzai!*" But no survivors came close enough to the station at midship to be picked up. After a couple of moments passed, someone on board *Lang* impatiently shouted, "Get over here, you SOB!" At the sound of the English-speaking voice, a whistle was heard from somewhere out in the darkness and all became an eerie silence. Now, no survivors could be picked up at all—at 2 a.m., Simpson moved out at 30 knots to rejoin with Moosbrugger's division.

As the two divisions rejoined, the crews of each ship began to relax and reflect upon their great victory. Each man compared what he had seen or heard to that of others. Moosbrugger was jubilant, as well as relieved. He had taken on the Japanese at their own best game of night fighting—and had won.

Everything had gone perfectly, as planned. He had fired off the first shots, Simpson had timed his part perfectly, each commander of each ship had followed the plan with unified precision, and the crews had performed with the expertise that Wilkinson originally expected.

As the victorious group sailed into Tulagi, the crews hoisted four homemade Japanese flags (still thinking they had sunk all four ships) and a broom up the yardarms signifying their "clean sweep." And clean it had been, too—the only casualties on the American side had been the broken feed pump on *Maury* and a seaman on *Lang* who had crushed his hand in a loader during the battle. Soon, the story of the great victory was being read by those back home.

For the Japanese the story was not nearly so pleasant. Aside from the loss of three ships, 1,210 soldiers and sailors had lost their lives that night. Only 310 men had been able to swim to the safety of Kolombangara Island. Lucky *Shigure*, which managed to escape the onslaught, would continue to fight effectively throughout the war. Showing her amazing ability to make great escapes over and over again, she would finally meet her fate on January 24, 1945, when the American submarine *Blackfin* would sink her by torpedo off Kota Bharu.

Perhaps the greatest casualty of all, though, was the blow to the Imperial Japanese Navy's pride. It had been extremely successful in the past in using the darkness of the night as an advantage; now the night had been turned against the Japanese themselves.

Moosbrugger had proven that destroyers were quite capable of fighting effectively by themselves, aside from the point that the Japanese were no longer the rulers of the sea at night. In fact, three nights later Moosbrugger would again lead his band of destroyers into Vella Gulf to take on the enemy. No Japanese destroyers would meet his challenge that night, but by using the same battle plan as before, his group sank four out of possibly seven barges. Indeed, Moosbrugger's initial contact with the enemy at Vella Gulf led to a brief halt to the Tokyo Express. His second contact was the beginning of the end of Japanese barge traffic in the Central Solomons, but that development in turn brought back the Tokyo Express. . . and the final sea battles of the Solomons. □

Rex A. Knight is a writer specializing in World War II history. Further readings: United States Destroyer Operations in WWII *by Theodore Roscoe;* A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy *by Paul S. Dull;* Japanese Destroyer Captain *by Captain Tameichi Hara, with Fred Saito and Roger Pineau.*

Even for an Audie Murphy, the hero's lot is not always a happy one.

By Robert I. Alotta

How old was I when I first heard the name "Audie Murphy"? I couldn't have been more than seven. But from that day to the present, to me and my generation, Audie Murphy's name spelled out everything good and great about America and the responsibilities of being an American.

A fifth-grade dropout from Texas, Audie Murphy joined the Army to fight the Germans. The best way to do so was by becoming an infantryman—a role promising a low ratio of life expectancy.

Yet, Murphy survived. In fact, when people asked him what he did in the war, he joked that he had beaten the odds. And he was very good at what he did: killing the enemy. He was so good at that—and survival—that he walked away from World War II with a chest full of medals, including the Medal of Honor.

Audie Murphy was already a hardened veteran of North Africa and Sicily when the U.S. Army came ashore at Salerno, but his greatest exploits still lay ahead of him.

He had earned more medals than any American military man had—or has—in the history of this nation. And yet, for the shy, unassuming Murphy, the winning of medals didn't represent a contest. He never set out to win anything.

As Don Graham writes it in his book, *No Name on the Bullet: A Biography of Audie Murphy* (Viking, 1989, $19.95), all Murphy wanted to do was live.

When the Army sent him home, the American people took to him. He was young and freckle-faced. He was a symbol of hope for the loved ones of all those freckle-faced kids who were still fighting for freedom in the South Pacific. Audie Murphy was ideal: there wasn't a *visible* scar on him. But . . . note that one word, *visible*. On the surface, Murphy was intact; but appearances can be deceiving, and they were in Audie Murphy's case.

In *No Name on the Bullet*, Graham tells us in no uncertain terms that Audie Murphy, the most decorated soldier of World War II, suffered from what we today call post-traumatic-stress disorder (PTSD). Like veterans of the Vietnam War, Murphy had his share of flashbacks, his share of nightmares, his share of sleepless nights. Yet he was a hero, he was "strong." He could never allow himself to appear weak.

Graham carefully documents these frightening episodes in Murphy's life, including his carrying a pistol wherever he went and sleeping with a gun under his pillow. Life in combat wasn't easy for this boy, and his life after wasn't that much of an improvement.

When Audie Murphy returned from World War II, he had no skills other than a fantastic ability to kill . . . and his fame. He capitalized on his fame—including his "killer" image—and became a Hollywood star. Murphy was never a "big" star, except when he starred in his own fictionalized life story, the movie *To Hell and Back*, and when he joined with Bill Mauldin in *The Red Badge of Courage*, which told more about Audie Murphy than his own account. Other films, most of them westerns, made use of his ability with guns—and his baby face. His career never reached the heights of a John Wayne, who had never shared in the military, but Murphy persevered—for a while. He always thought there would be a better day, but there never was.

There's an old saying that "lucky in love, unlucky in cards." Poor Audie Murphy proved the adage wrong time and time again: he wasn't lucky in either. Murphy was married first to Wanda Hendrix, a starlet of the '40s and early '50s, and later to Pam Archer, who became mother to his children. Neither marriage provided Murphy what he wanted and needed, and it is probable that he did not know himself what he wanted or needed. The war had made him a casualty, and he didn't know it. As a gambler or as an investor, Audie Murphy was always the loser. . .the big loser. Audie Murphy died in 1971 in an air crash, at the age of 47, while literally flying after another dream of success.

No Name on the Bullet plunges on, however, to unearth the dark side of the "selling of an American hero." Don Graham assesses Murphy's friends, including the women in his life, and shows us that darker side of an American hero.

Audie Murphy is almost forgotten today . . .except in sarcastic asides heard in war movies when an author wants to make some snide comment about heroism. That is sad. Not only his heroics, but his memory, should be recalled whenever we expect our heroes to be heroes for the rest of their lives. We tend to forget that Audie Murphy, like so many others in combat, did what he had to do to survive. He had been trained to do something, and he did it. He never expected to be honored for doing well what the Army trained him to do. His main

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"failure," as *No Name on the Bullet* points out, was in not being trained to live the rest of his life. Is that not a "failure" seen before and after in many a fine soldier? □

One Woman's Army, *by Charity Adams Earley; Texas A&M, College Station, Texas; 1989.*

It was America of the 1940s and Charity Adams—by timing, race and gender—had three strikes against her: as a member of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), she was a female black officer. Thus her book offers a perspective of World War II not usually encountered.

Once the war was under way, she was assigned to the Training Center (TC) Plans and Training Section. WACs were being used to replace men in TCs due to the war and officers were needed abroad, too. She found herself in England serving in the Postal Directory Service and was stationed in Birmingham while her unit was being pieced together. She met part of the contingent arriving aboard the *Ile de France*; the women were glad to see familiar faces from back home after dodging German U-boats for 11 days.

The unit was responsible for the redirection of mail to U.S. personnel in the European Theater of Operations—*seven million* to be exact—consisting of the Army, Navy, Marines and more, so if you were in the ETO in the mid-forties and received a morale-boosting letter from home, chances are Charity Adams and her unit were responsible for it reaching you. Being in a wartime situation, some personnel moved as often as three times a *week* and address changes had to be kept up with—no mean feat. There would obviously be a chance—with seven million on the mailing list—of finding two or more persons with the same name, but would you believe 7,500 Robert Smiths? So instead of names, after a while serial numbers were used, this also no mean feat in precomputer days. When Adams and her group first set up, there was a "small" backlog waiting for them: six airplane hangars full of Christmas packages and great piles of mail that had been returned to England during the Battle of the Bulge.

Adams was stationed in Rouen, France, when V-E Day arrived, and repairs needed to be done to the facility—not surprisingly, since the post was said to have been built originally for Napoleon's troops. Hard physical work needed done and she needed men to help. She got them. Some French civilians, but also 300 German POWs were assigned to turn the post into something habitable.

Adams never fought under fire, and she is first to acknowledge this, but her book is worth reading for the fight she fought, and won, on the battlefront of discrimination.

Patricia A. Allen

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I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

Hal Orringer
Vice President, Circulation and Marketing

Armament

Continued from page 8

the best roads in good weather. The muddy tracks and hilly terrain in the Ardennes served to cut that figure by half or so.

Then, too, in spite of the Henschel firm's engineering efforts, there remained certain faults in the machine itself. There were many field breakdowns of the Tigers (it had over 26,000 parts!), and it easily became mired in the soft Ardennes soil. The great weight of the monsters made them notoriously difficult to retrieve. As example, on December 10, the 501 SS Heavy Panzer Battalion reported all 15 of its machines down for maintenance; on December 17, only 8 out of 30 of the Tigers in the 506 Heavy Panzer Battalion were combat ready. (Part of the fault, it seems, was the sabotage by forced labor at the production facilities. Many Tigers left the plant with defects.)

Beyond its troublesome maintenance problems, the Tiger itself was a fickle machine. In the hands of an experienced crew, it was a deadly armored vehicle—more than a match for any other. However, many of Germany's best Tiger veterans were now dead or captured.

Replacements were handpicked from among volunteers, and there always were many of these, since service with the Tigers was something of an honor in the German Army. However, the high *esprit de corps* of these new members could not make up for their lesser experience. Their performance in the Ardennes was uneven.

Regardless of such problems, one advantage did help to outweigh the others. The typical American soldier greatly feared the Tiger. This was particularly true of the U.S. tankers. As an anonymous gunner for the 2nd Armored Division once told a reporter: "The Sherman gun is ineffective. The crews know it, and it affects their morale." One time, too, an American tank commander refused to order his Shermans to take on advancing Tigers for fear that he would be disobeyed. The individual American rifleman knew that a bazooka had to hit a PzKpfw IV or Panther "just right" to knock it out. Of course, the Tigers presented an even greater problem. A flank shot at close range was the only sure course, and this could be exceedingly dangerous since other tanks or German panzer grenadiers were likely to be lurking about. In general, all American soldiers found that the "best way" of coping with the German Tigers was to avoid them.

Among the Tiger units that faced the Americans at the Bulge, the 501 SS Heavy Panzer Battalion under *SS Obersturmbannführer* Heinz von Westerhagen was the best known. Perhaps the most

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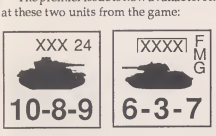

The unit on the left is Heinz Guderian's *24th Panzer Corps;* the one on the right is Georgii Zhukov's *Front Mobile Group* . The *24th* was a crack outfit that helped spearhead the drive east all the way from the border. The *FMG* was an *ad hoc* group of tank and cavalry units quickly thrown together to blunt the panzers' final drive on Moscow. In October and November these units clashed repeatedly — when the dual was over, the *FMG* was totally destroyed, but the Germans failed to take Moscow.

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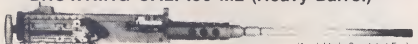

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famous Bulge photo is that of Tiger 222, photographed at the Kaiserbaracke crossroads on December 18 while moving with the 1 SS Panzer Division. The paperwork for the panzer battalion showed an assigned strength of 45 *Königstigers*, but only 30 were on hand on December 17, the day after the battle began.

Half a dozen accompanied *Kampfgruppe Peiper* in the infamous Joachim Peiper's thrust to La Gleize. In the movie, *The Battle of the Bulge*, the German panzer spearhead commander, a "Colonel Hessler," was delighted by the assignment of Tigers to his command. The real-life "Hessler," *SS Obersturmbannführer* Peiper, was less than enamored with the heavy tanks. He considered them "too slow" and too heavy for the lightning advance he had planned. Peiper placed them to the rear of his column.

The three companies of Tigers followed in the wake of *Kampfgruppe Peiper* through Honsfeld to Heppenbach and then Born. They then moved from the Kaiserbaracke crossroads north of St. Vith to Ligneuville and then on to Stavelot. On December 18, six to 12 Tigers crossed the Amblève River with the intention of joining the lead battle group. Several were subjected to strafing attacks from Allied aircraft. The heavy panzers were undamaged, although a number of the German paratroopers who were clinging to their decks were wounded.

Tiger 105, the mount of the commander of the 1st company, Jürgen Brand, was hit on the gun mantlet by an American rifle grenade as it moved through the village of Stavelot. Ordered to pull back along the steep and narrow street, the driver, who had no field of vision, sent the vehicle crashing into a house, where it was buried by the wreckage. Brand, one of the more experienced Tiger crewmen, joined another panzer, staying in Stavelot for the night. The following morning, Brand, in Tiger 131—followed by Tiger 133—moved to the west to join *Kampfgruppe Knittel* and the 1 SS Panzer Reconnaissance Battalion, although the battle with the Americans in the village continued unabated.

Later that day, with the Americans trying to recapture Stavelot, Brand and his two Tigers were ordered to check out the situation there. Pushing east, Brand was stopped by a daisy chain of mines across the road leading to Stavelot. Returning to the Knittel Group's command post, he was forced to report that the Americans were indeed back in possession of the town. It appeared that the Germans of *Kampfgruppe Peiper* and *Kampfgruppe Knittel* were trapped.

Blocked from entry to Stavelot, Brand's two Tigers moved back to Trois Ponts to provide covering fire. On December 22, Tiger 133 was disabled by an

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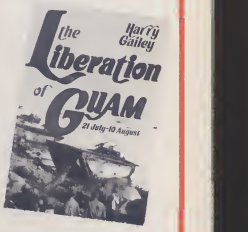

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The six heavy Tiger tanks still with *Kampfgruppe Peiper* gave the U.S. 3rd Armored Division a tough time in its attempts to recapture La Gleize and eliminate the German positions north of the Amblève River. Blocking roads leading into the German salient, they knocked out several Shermans. However, the fuel-thirsty tanks ran out of gas, and most would have to be abandoned when Peiper made his escape from the pocket on Christmas Eve. A few tanks were able to ford the Amblève River and escape toward Wanne.

Another portion of the panzer battalion participated in an attack from the south on December 19 designed to reopen the bridge captured by the Americans at Stavelot. *SS Obersturmbannführer* Heinz Buchner was present at the battle: "We came from the road from Lodometz to Stavelot and stopped there because we were short on fuel and were being fired on by an anti-tank gun. Toward the evening of the 19th, my Tiger and several PzKpfw IVs attacked the bridge and the entrance to the town of Stavelot. The attack was broken and our tanks retired in the direction of Wanne. The bridge was blown an hour later." Tiger 222, extensively photographed by the *SS Kriegsberichter*, was knocked out in this assault just south of the contested span. By the end of December, the 501 SS had lost 13 of its Tigers—more than half of these had been abandoned with the armored wreckage of *Kampfgruppe Peiper*.

Many of the heavy tanks had experienced mechanical troubles in the first days of the battle. According to Edmund Zeger, a mechanic with the battalion, only two Mk VIs from his company managed to link up with Peiper. The other 12 developed mechanical troubles along the way.

As 1944 drew to a close, Hitler's "clear Bastogne" order took effect and the 1 SS Panzer Division was among the chosen. By the time the division reached the Bastogne vicinity, the 501 SS had 13 operational vehicles, with another 14 still in repair. Over the following days, another dozen PzKpfw VIs were lost. When the battalion was transferred to the Russian front on January 27, it only had 13 Tigers left.

Another Tiger-equipped outfit deployed for the Bulge was the 506th Panzer Battalion, assigned to the 6th *Panzer Armee*. Under the command of Major Gerhard Lange, the battalion had a

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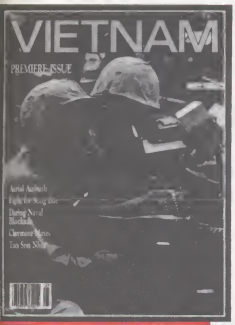

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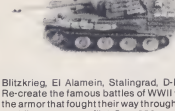

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notorious history as the German Tiger unit that had smashed the attack of the U.S. 2nd Armored Division on November 17, 1944, at Puffendorf, Belgium. In that engagement, the American division lost 57 tanks in a single day! One gunner said the effect of the Sherman gun on the Tigers was "like hitting them with a pea shooter."

When the Bulge offensive began, however, the battalion's 30 Tigers were still with the German LXXIV Corps near Duren. The tanks began their rail transport to the front on the night of December 17. By December 21, four of eight trains had unloaded (another two unloaded the next day) and the advance party of the battalion had arrived at the front. Even so, we do not know the precise time of the arrival and commitment of the battalion in the Ardennes. Its march route was Euskirchen-Hellenthal-Losheim-St. Vith-Bastogne, which would indicate that it did not arrive earlier than December 20. Only eight of the panzers were operational on December 17, the rest being down for repair or in shipment. But the battalion concentrated in the area around Wardin, north of Bastogne, on New Year's Day with 13 operational Tiger IIs.

In the following days, the battalion fought a tough engagement with the U.S. 6th Armored Division. On January 2, the 68th Tank Battalion moved on Arloncourt, only to lose all but one Sherman in Company B to "terrific *nebelwerfer* [rocket] concentrations and two camouflaged Tigers." Over the next days, the 15th Tank Battalion attempted to lure the heavy German tanks into the open, but most of the American efforts were fruitless since the 75mm armor-piercing shot "bounced off the Tigers like marbles off a brick."

On January 13, the five *Königstigers* of the 1st Company clashed with the M4 Shermans of the 15th Tank Battalion in the woods near the village of Moinet. Two other Tigers, under Lieutenant Jürgen Tegethoff, moved up to assist in the heavy fighting. Tegethoff's panzer was struck by eight 75mm rounds that benignly bounced off the glacis plate. Finally, a Sherman fired a flank shot that set the panzer ablaze. Incredibly, Tegethoff and his crew were able to escape from the burning tank just before it exploded. Others were not so lucky; casualties for the German tank crews had been heavy. Major Lange complained to his superiors about the piecemeal commitment of his battalion. For this, he was relieved of command.

Another failure was registered by the 301 *Funklenk* Heavy Panzer Battalion, originally assigned to the 6th *Panzer Armee* for the Ardennes Offensive along with the 319th Panzer Company. This

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was the radio or *funklenk (FKL)* Tiger unit that was the only German panzer unit with Tiger Is in the Ardennes fighting. The attached 319th Panzer Company consisted of remote control B-IV demolition tanks (3.5-ton low-profile, tracked bombs powered by a 49hp motor). The theory was that the Tigers would control and provide protection for the demolition tanks while they advanced to the obstacle and blasted a hole through the enemy line with their 450-kilogram charges. The robot tanks could also be used to establish a path through enemy mine fields. The Tigers would then exploit the breach.

It was a nice idea, but one that usually didn't work.

Still another derivation of the German Tiger slated for Bulge action was the huge 128mm *Jagdtiger* tank destroyer. The gun was exceedingly powerful and, at 77 tons, the armor was extremely thick. Hitler expected these behemoths to be invulnerable. For their planned deployment, the *LVIII Panzerkorps* had been given a section of special bridging equipment to pass the monsters over the Our River, but Hitler had one of his last-minute brain waves and asked that the *Jagdtigers* go to the 6th *Panzer Armee* to block American reinforcements from moving south along the Eupen-Monschau road. There, he believed, the huge tank destroyers might be pivotal in stopping the expected American reaction from the north. When the offensive opened December 16, however, the *Jagdtigers* were still in rail transport to Blankenheim.

Days after the offensive began, the American reinforcements indeed were streaming into the German attack zone from the north. Hitler insisted on finding out what had become of *s. Panzerjäger Battalion 653.* "What about the *Jagdtigers*?" he demanded. General Herbert Büchs, a staff officer at Army headquarters, had bad news for the *Führer.* "A check has been made," he began, "and the trains bringing the battalion forward have been blocked by air attack on the rail lines." The battalion had never even crossed the Rhine! Hitler was outraged. "They must be mad!" he cried. "If the enemy attacks our defense with 10 or 12 heavy tanks, there's enough screaming to bring the house down. But when we have 24 of the heaviest tanks in the world, they aren't even used!"

A message to *OB West* on December 29 shows that two of the tank destroyers had been unloaded and were now headed to the Sixth Panzer Army front. One of these appears to have been knocked out west of St. Vith in Maldingen and then sketched by a teen-age Belgian civilian in 1945. The rest of the battalion, now up to a strength of 26, was shunted south to Operation *Nordwind* in Alsace. □

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Continued from page 10

menko noted bluntly: "This appeal for aid was legitimate."

The 1st and 4th Ukrainian Fronts nonetheless were in no position to "bounce" the Dukla Pass. So, the Soviets scrambled to send in supplies and advisers while *Stavka* readied a hasty drive into the Carpathians. With many of his own unconventional warfare elements tied down in the Balkans, the NKVD Chief of External Intelligence, General P.M. Fitin, saw an opening for some help from an old acquaintance. He turned to Maj. Gen. William J. Donovan and the American OSS.

Donovan had met Fitin in Moscow two days after Christmas in 1943 in the wake of the Tehran Conference of Allied leaders. Donovan's visit proved worthwhile. He and Fitin agreed to swap intelligence liaison teams; a designated OSS group arrived in Moscow shortly thereafter. But the NKVD never came to Washington (at least officially). Possibly mindful of the domestic impact of "Red secret police" loose in the capital in an election year and warned of likely NKVD espionage by FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover, President Franklin D. Roosevelt squelched the American half of the exchange. Nevertheless, Donovan and Fitin's talks commenced a regular transfer of intelligence, some joint espionage and sabotage planning and a vague promise for combined efforts at "physical subversion." The Slovakian uprising seemed to offer an opportunity for Soviet-American cooperation. Donovan jumped at the chance.

Given the unexpected developments in Slovakia, OSS/Mediterranean Theater of Operations reacted quickly. A team assembled for transport to Tri Duby (Three Oaks), a small airfield about six miles south of the main rebel headquarters at Banksa Bystrica. Lieutenant Holt Green, USNR, commanded a covert action team that included five other Americans and Major J. Sehmer of the British Army. They boarded a specially equipped B-17G Flying Fortress of the shadowy 15th Special Group. Another Fort accompanied Green's plane. It carried Colonel George Kraigher and a portion of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces' Aircrew Rescue Unit Number 1. Kraigher hoped to retrieve a dozen or so downed Allied fliers in Slovak care. Together, the bombers also carried about five tons of arms, ammunition, medical supplies and radio gear.

The OSS planes winged northeast from their Italian bases late on September 17, 1944, guarded by 41 vigilant P-51 Mustangs from the 306th Fighter Wing.

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Green's orders were overly ambitious, as was often the case in OSS operations. He intended to act as liaison to Colonel Golian's Slovakian Army and the Soviet-directed partisans. He not only would arrange for their aerial resupply, but he was to train them to help evacuate grounded Allied airmen, and to collect a wide range of intelligence on German, Slovak and Russian orders of battle, local industrial targets, and general military, economic and political developments. Green and his half-dozen men arrived at Tri Duby with plenty to do.

The scene at the rebel airdrome was surprisingly calm. Green reported the area "firmly held by Czechoslovak partisan forces." Kraigher recalled meeting a half-dozen Russian officers at the airfield, and he noted that a steady stream of Soviet aircraft arrived day and night bearing supplies and men, including the first members of the 2nd Czechoslovak Parachute Brigade. Soviet records indicate that the 4th and 5th Long Range Bomber Corps were detached specifically to support the Slovak insurgency. These were the airplanes seen by Colonel Kraigher.

Along with about 360 tons of arms and munitions, Soviet NKVD and GRU officers brought in more than 3,000 partisan cadres by air and ground infiltration. But the operation was not without cost. On September 5 alone, 11 of 30 Soviet light bombers failed to survive the low-level mountain flight to Tri Duby. Mists and high winds, Soviet pilot inexperience and German opposition hobbled the airlift. It took from September 17 to October 25 to land 1,800 Czech paratroopers at Tri Duby, minus almost all heavy equipment. Soviet planes could not carry anything over two tons; they did not use gliders. Green ruefully described his new airborne allies as "almost unarmed."

Although relations with the Russians were cordial, there was no serious attempt at combined operations due to the disparity in size between the two countries' advisory outfits and the different nature of their missions. The Soviets hedged their bets against a Slovak conventional defeat and emphasized the creation of a guerrilla infrastructure, conveniently building on native Communist cells. Numerous Soviet teams moved out quickly to dispersed partisan elements. The Russians at the airhead were almost wholly preoccupied with expediting the flow of incoming troops and supplies, and were not very conversant with the tactical situation. The American OSS stuck with Colonel Golian's regulars at Tri Duby in order to carry out their several tasks.

Green's men accomplished a great deal in a brief five weeks of active operations.

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They kept Golian informed of Allied plans and arranged for two additional deliveries of OSS men, bringing the total strength of the detachment to 28 OSS and nine air rescue men.

More than 20 more tons of supplies came in as well. Green's teams instructed the Slovaks on the use of the bazooka and the Bren gun, while aiding in the construction of anti-tank obstacles and the emplacement of demolitions. Despite horrible weather, American special operations planes extracted 40 U.S. fliers, three British pilots and a badly wounded Czech. Finally, Green and his men sent over a thousand words a day of invaluable information from the steadily shrinking heartland of the Slovak resistance.

Despite the work of Green and his Russian associates, the Slovakian uprising was doomed. The two rebel field divisions surrendered to the Germans almost intact when their commanders lost heart; ruthless SS units shot many of the men and sent the balance to local concentration camps. Only about 12 understrength and lightly armed battalions of Slovakian infantry survived, minus tanks and artillery. These desperate men joined the ill-equipped partisans to form a loose cordon within a few dozen miles of Banska Bystrica and its airstrip. Miraculously, they held out more than six weeks while parts of seven German divisions battered at them from all directions.

As the Red Army tried to break in past the mountains to the east, the Reds sustained 80,000 casualties. They lost their entire 1st Guards Cavalry Corps and most of the 1st Czechoslovak Army while battering the Dukla Pass in a clumsy effort to reach Tri Duby by land.

The grudging German mountain line held, isolating Golian's rebels more than 100 miles from Russian lines. With the Red Army beaten back by early October, SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler himself dictated the outline for a massive seven-division clearing operation that began on October 18. Mighty German pincers converged against the Slovak headquarters. Led by the real-life thugs of Colonel Doctor Oskar Dirlewanger's Brigade, the 14th SS Grenadier Division *Galicia* drove south from Poland, where the Warsaw rebellion had been viciously quelled. Snorting tanks of the 18th SS Panzergrenadier Division *Horst Wessel* punched north from Hungary, conveniently returned to the Axis stable after a German-inspired *coup d'etat*. Random massacres, burned villages, and lines of glum Slovaks trudging toward concentration camps marked the German advances. The end was in sight for the rebels.

Ugly final scenes transpired at Tri Duby and Banksa Bystrica as the Ger-

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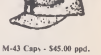

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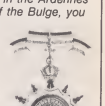

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man panzers crashed out of the woodlines on October 26. Colonel Golian abandoned his headquarters, and the entire polyglot mass of Czech paratroopers, Soviet NKVD, American OSS, Slovak Infantry and frightened villagers pulled out, heading for the doubtful succor of a winter in the high Carpathians. Slovak discipline collapsed in the nightmare retreat that followed. Enraged Slovak troops burnt Golian's escape plane and betrayed him into German hands. NKVD officers were found lying in slushy roadside ditches with their throats slashed.

The American OSS team split up into four groups to exfiltrate. Before they separated, Green's team sent a plaintive final report, describing men who "threw away their weapons, stole the American supplies, and fled through the snow-covered mountains." Free Slovakia was gone.

The OSS men reunited by November 6 for an attempt to cross the upper ranges of the Carpathians. Roving columns of hard-bitten *Waffen* SS and resurgent *Hlinka* Guards hounded the Americans. The NKVD and its affiliates had melted away, some to hide out, many struggling to reach the Red Army front. Green, too, took his party northeast, toward the Russian lines.

The Americans and a few loyal Slovaks now fought a howling winter and an increasingly hostile populace—the locals shunned the U.S. soldiers to prevent SS reprisals. By December 25, six OSS agents and all the Army Air Forces men were gone, betrayed, surprised, or unlucky while out on patrols or trying to steal food from spiteful villagers. The other 22 Americans hid out in a deserted mountain inn and its outbuildings. Green's troops spent a joyless Christmas—hungry, exhausted, and hunted—waiting for a break in yet another blizzard before trekking the next 50 miles toward the Red Army. Most slept fitfully, heedless of security. They hoped to rise when the storm passed.

Instead, they awoke to the stutter of German burp guns as an SS company, guided by traitorous Slovak partisans, seized the snowbound hotel. All but two Americans were killed or captured. The luckless OSS men who survived the grim march to Mauthausen prison camp were executed without trial in January 1945, following a week of excruciating torture. The duo who escaped the SS raid fled east with a partisan girl and reached a Soviet unit a few weeks later. American after-action reports described the entire undertaking as "a disaster to the resistance and OSS." Slovakia remained under German control until almost the end of the war, after which the heirs of the NKVD returned to hold sway. □

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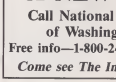
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